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A REVIEW
OF THE
POLICY AND PECULIAR DOCTRINES
OF THE
Modern Church of Rome,

WHEREIN
Their dangerous Tendency, political and religious, is considered, and their
true Origin designated; and some of those, which the Protestants con-
sider as the most objectionable, are proved not to have been held by
the ancient British, Saxon, or Irish Christian Churches:

IN ANSWER TO
ARGUMENTS ADVANCED
IN FAVOUR OF
THE ROMAN-CATHOLIC QUESTION;

And, more especially, those of
SIR JOHN THROCKMORTON.

BY THE REV. PETER ROBERTS, A. M.
Author of *Letters to M. Volney, An Harmony of the Epistles, &c.*

Ὅπου μὴν—δικαιοὶ σωτηρίαν τ᾽ ἀληθείας παρελθούσιν· ἀλλὰ λέγουσιν μὴν μίαν
παρερησίαν, τὴν ἀγαθὴν προβαλλομένους ἐλπίδα· εὐχρισθαι δὲ, ὥς τε τοὺς
ἐντεταλμένους τῷ συγγραμμάτι, μὴδὲν τῆς ἀληθείας πρότερον ἀγνοῖν.

Nicephorus de Primatu Papæ, p. 18. ed. Lug. Bat. 1695.

It is our duty not to be remiss as to the truth; but to advance before us the
shield of a good hope, and tell it plainly; entreating the reader to make the
truth his primary object.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY E. WILLIAMS,
BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER TO THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF
YORK, 11, STRAND, NEAR CHARING-CROSS.

1809.

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Catholic Church, Roman U.S.

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PREFACE.

WHEN the sense of the Legislature of the United Kingdom had, in the Session of the year 1805, been so fully taken, and decidedly expressed, as it then was, upon that which is called the Catholic Question, the general opinion seemed to be, that no further attempt to bring it forward again would soon be made. But notwithstanding the supposition, natural as it was, the appearance of *The Considerations*, a work of some extent and labour, nearly at the beginning of the following Sessions, and other proceedings of late, shew clearly, that so very far is the Question from having been given up, that, on the contrary, every effort will be sedulously made and persisted in to carry it.

In such answers to those who have written in favour of the Question, as have been seen

by the Writer of the following pages, though the political and religious systems of the Romish church have been truly and forcibly represented, they have not been traced to their origin ; neither have some mistakes, as to the primitive church of Britain and Ireland, and a presumed compatibility of the Romish religion with the Constitution of England, been cleared up. These deficiencies he has endeavoured to supply ; and he trusts it will appear, that his motives, for venturing to submit his sentiments to the Public, arise from a sincere wish to confirm what he believes to be the truth, and to oppose what he believes to be erroneous and dangerous ; and it has been his endeavour to express his ideas in the language which it becomes a Christian to use.

In the Appendix, a few pages will be found in answer to some of the principal arguments of Bossuet in favour of the church of Rome, which, as they are generally resorted to and relied on by the members of that church, seemed to require thus much.

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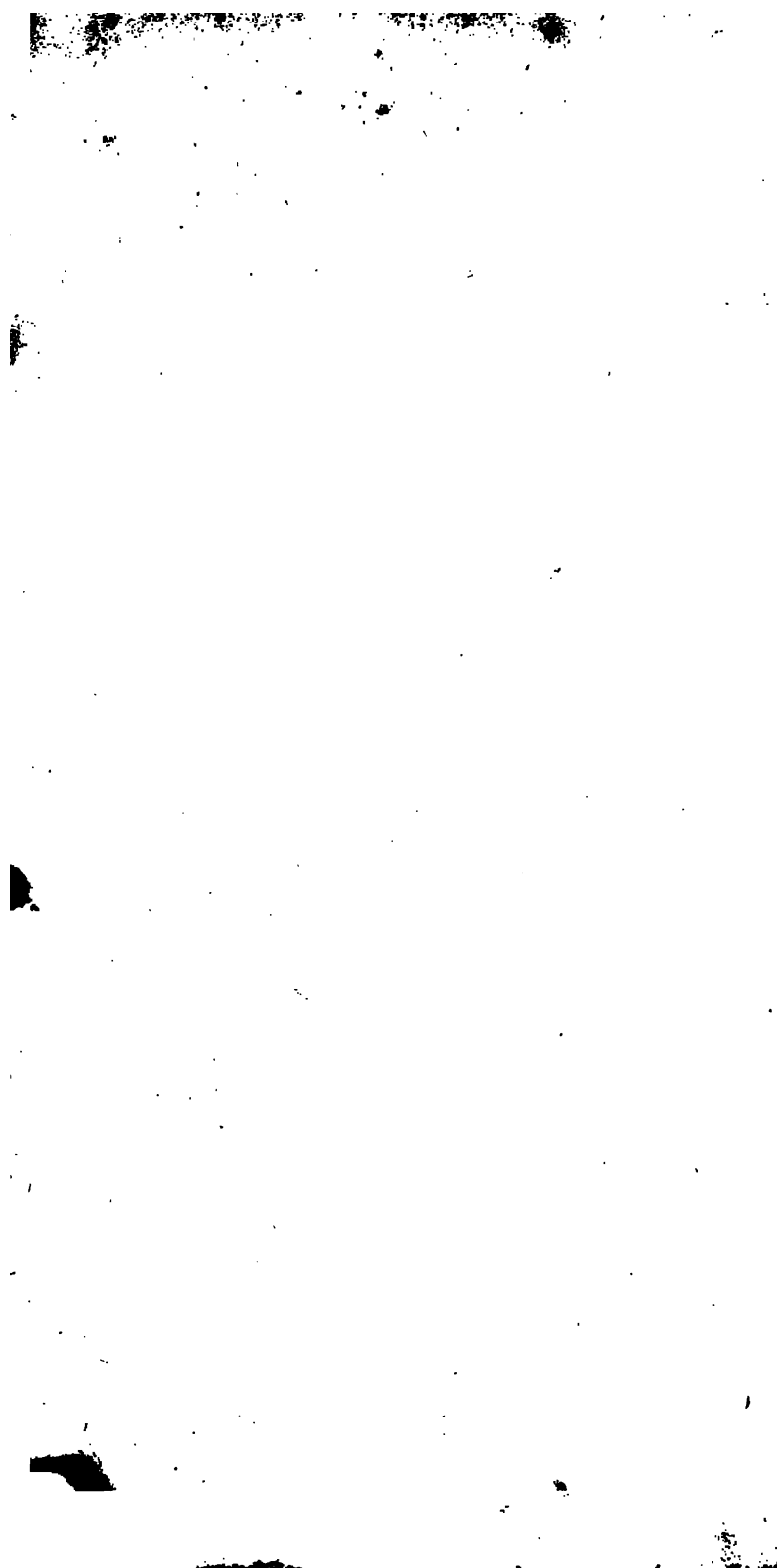
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A REVIEW,

8c.

OF the many and great advantages to national happiness, that have been the effects of the Reformation, there are few that deserve a more unqualified praise, than that spirit of toleration, which has grown with the strength of the established church of England.

Before that great event, if we except the authority, and the more immediate promulgators of that authority, from which it was derived, the very idea of religious toleration appears to have been scarcely, or but very superficially, conceived as politically expedient, or even consistent with an attachment to any religion. Happily it has, since the Reformation, been held as a principle of the British constitution to grant as perfect a toleration as can be consistent with the safety of the state; and it is one, which every member of her established church may feel a just pride in acknowledging. The question of the admission to participate in legislation is, however, perfectly distinct from toleration; for where such admission is granted, it is no longer *toleration*, but an *union*; and, according to the generally-received principles of the constitution of England, such an admission of the Roman Catholics would be, not only the intro-

duction of *a new principle* into the constitution, but of one considered as formerly excluded by it at the Revolution.

It certainly cannot be indifferent to the subjects of the United Kingdom what is the motive, and what may be the effect, of introducing *a new principle* into its legislation. It is a question in which every individual has a real and permanent interest, whether as a friend to religious youth, or to the government and constitution of his country.

We have seen enough of the danger of innovations upon the political maxims of particular states in no very distant example, wherein the public body, exhausted by the violence of the paroxysm, has become a machine, or a victim, to the caprice of its rulers. If so awful a warning has not been exhibited in vain, it will be deemed an obligation, even of common prudence, to examine whatever is urged formally on the subject of that which is called the Roman-Catholic Question; and it must be acknowledged, that its advocates have laboured strenuously to attain their object. Nothing appears to have been omitted that could prepare the minds of the people, of England more especially, to look upon it either with favour, or with indifference; as a subject of political benevolence, or of expediency; of right, and even of necessity. If this proves that it will not easily be relinquished, it proves also, that, however the effective power and influence of the See of Rome be estimated, the zeal of its adherents has lost nothing of its warmth, its activity, or its policy. It is therefore absolutely the duty of every sincere Protestant

to look whither all this may tend ; and to beware, lest our Lebanon give the helve to the cutting down of the forest ; lest the shades of ignorance and superstition once more obscure the light of the Gospel ; and, in divine wrath for our encouragement of error, this lamp of Heaven be taken from us, and we become a prey to that dominion of infidelity and tyranny, which is the scourge of God. If any one be inclined to consider these ideas as visionary, he is requested, at least, to pause before he condemns ; and to reflect, whether evil, moral or political, bring not on its own punishment ; whether a sacrifice of the truth, and confirmation of error, be more likely to bring on a blessing, or a curse ; and remember, that such, at least, were the ideas of those, who, by a struggle of one century, have made Britain, for two more, the happiest of nations.

There were undoubtedly some men of high character, and conspicuous abilities, who, at a very early period of the agitation of the Catholic Question, foretold much of what has followed. In its progress, its intent, which scarce seen arose, has, in its unfolding, been so aggrandized, that, like Virgil's fame, its utmost height may yet be enveloped in clouds ; and whether there *Romana* be read for *Anglicana*, or the single or triple crown be the highest, cannot yet be plainly discerned. Our conception of what may be is formed on what has been. If we know the tree by its fruits, we also know what the fruits will be, with no less certainty, by the tree, wheresoever it can bear fruit.

Amongst those who gave a warning of what might

then be expected to follow, from the measures proposed in the Catholic Bill, introduced into the Irish House of Commons, was the celebrated Mr. Flood, who, in political sagacity, powerful language, and acute and solid reasoning, was at least not inferior to any of his contemporaries. As therefore the Hon. Author of *The Considerations* has liberally quoted another eloquent orator, the two following extracts from the speeches of Mr. Flood, on the Catholic Bill, may not improperly be introduced here.

Mr. Flood said, that “ he always wished to embosom the Roman Catholics in the state; yet, without courting praise on one hand, or fearing censure on the other, he would, neglectful of both, deliver his opinion on this great subject, and hoped it would be received with the same candour it was given. About five years ago,” said he, “ a law was passed, granting the Roman Catholics infinitely less than is now proposed; the day was celebrated with rejoicing, and it was thought we had reconciled every party. I am sorry now to hear Gentlemen speak as if nothing was done for them. The Right Honourable * Gentleman, who prepared the Bill now before us, well knows that I did object to that † indiscriminate clause;—one reason was, that while you were endeavouring to conciliate that *estimable and beloved body of men*, you seemed to hide your bounties, and to shew only the severity of the laws. If a sorry Popish agent had

* Mr. Gardiner, afterwards Lord Mountjoy, and who was massacred by the rebels. Such was his reward.

† The words of this clause are not given in the Report.

done thus, he would have been unworthy the men for whom he acted, and it would much surprise me. But a Protestant Parliament should be *wise* and *frank* enough to explain and declare the whole scope of their intention. In the former laws, leases for years were granted to them upon the avowed principle of restraining them from any influence in elections. This law then goes beyond toleration; it *gives them a power*, and *tends to make a change* in the state. I have a great respect for the Roman Catholics; and though I will not condemn, yet I will not wholly approve, their conduct. Ninety years ago, the question was, whether Popery and arbitrary power should be established in the person of King James, or freedom and the Protestant religion in the person of King William? Four-fifths of the inhabitants of Ireland adhered to the cause of King James; they were defeated, and I rejoice in their defeat. The laws that followed this event were not laws of persecution, but of political necessity; and are you now prepared for *a new government*? Can you possibly suppose, though the Roman Catholics prefer you to every other people, that they will prefer you to themselves? What then is the consequence if you give them equal power with the Protestants? Can a Protestant constitution survive? Yet, should the majority of this nation attempt to alter the constitution, I firmly believe they would be repelled by the minority, and then a total convulsion must follow."

Irish Parl. Debates, Feb. 20th,
A. D. 1782, p. 255.

And again, on the 27th of the same month, he said :
 “ Though we talk as sentimentally as we please, yet we should not give without consideration. I admit the merits of the Roman Catholics, and that merit makes me consent to enlarge their privileges ; but I will not consent to their having any influence in choosing Members for this House.”

Such were the sentiments of Mr. Flood, which the events that have followed have but too strongly shown to have been not rashly expressed or ill-founded.

It is, therefore, by no means surprising, if this nation should not, without apprehension, observe the unremitted anxiety to acquire political power manifested by the Catholic body. The question is not one that involves merely the interests or occurrences of the present day ; it comprehends the fate of ages, the happiness or misery of millions yet unborn.

Such is the importance of the question, on which the Hon. Author of *The Considerations*, and others, have endeavoured to affect the public mind with an opinion in favour of the petition of the Roman Catholics, by a publication possibly not expected after the question had been so fully debated and determined in Parliament : and still less so, that there should be so little that is new in argument, though the mode certainly entitles it to a higher estimation than any other publication of the same import which has hitherto appeared.

This publication may, however, claim attention as a comment on the petition itself, and giving a more ample view of its various objects, which, comprised as they are in the petition, in few but comprehensive

words, were less distinctly perceptible, and perhaps not sufficiently understood by the nation at large.

The arguments, that have the greatest appearance of novelty, are those suggested in favour of the doctrines of the church of Rome, as now held, upon an assumed position, that they have remained unvaried from the first ages of its introduction into this kingdom. To this suggestion, as the subject has long lain dormant, it will be necessary also to attend particularly; and, as far as may be, to point out the true origin of some of the peculiar doctrines of that church.

The report of the debates on the Catholic Question will make it less necessary to dwell on many of the author's arguments; and therefore it will be more the object of the present occasion to consider those which either are new, or may admit of further-discussion.

To a Protestant it is a very new, and by no means a congenial, idea, that religion should be considered as having nothing to do with policy; still more so is it to conceive, that they who, in debating on such a question as the Catholic one, contend for the connexion of religion with policy, *are not serious* in so doing.*

But, as the advocate of the Catholic Question represents this distinct consideration as an argument for the admission of the Catholics into places of trust, it is requisite to give it in his own statement:—

* “ Catholics” (he says) “ feel like other men ;

are influenced by all the impressions to which the mind is subject; have their apprehensions, their dislikes, and their friendships; look to their interests, and are swayed by views of preferment, honour, and common ambition. And where, it will be asked, is their religion? Their religion finds its place, as it does too much in all men, often far behind in the back ground; sometimes in a situation more advanced; but seldom is it actively employed, when worldly views come in competition with its *less impressive* calls."

The general course of this argument, "that men are swayed by the views of interest, preferment, honour, and ambition, so as often to leave their religion too far behind in the back ground," is frequently but too true, as to the *common occurrences* of life; because that men in pursuit of advantage are apt to yield to impressions, which they flatter themselves may be reconciled with their religious principles; or, satisfied with the idea of their general respect for, and attachment to, religion, conclude themselves to be within its hopes and benefits without any careful examination of their title. But men are not therefore the less sensible of its real importance; and if they are not actively employed with respect to its prosperity, it is that they suppose either its safety not exposed to danger, or its prosperity not likely to be much promoted by their efforts. For, in either of these cases, (however the sense of religion may otherwise have lain nearly dormant,) no one, who has any real regard for his religion, is likely to remain either indifferent or

inactive. It is certain that the Catholics have not done so.

In the passage just quoted, the words *less impressive* seem, according to the course of the argument, to denote calls *which have less influence*; but, as they stand in the sentence, they may also denote calls *which are of less importance*, and so do not exclude the attention to its *more important calls*. The former sense seems the most connected with the argument, the latter with experience.

To enforce the argument, an observation is introduced of a most extraordinary nature, and as singular as it is unfavourable to those who are concerned in it, though apparently as a consequence of the principle assumed*. "It is" (says the author) "*really laughable*, in this season of man's existence, to hear *even legislators* talk as if they seriously believed that religion had any thing to do with politics."

In a country, where a great part of the political institutions have arisen from religious motives and considerations, it might seem very possible that its legislators should really believe that there was a close connexion between its policy and its religion; and it might also seem rather requisite, as to respect of station, whether their arguments were, or were not, admitted to be of force, to give them credit for being serious in their assertions.

The author of *The Considerations* would undoubtedly feel himself little obliged to any one, who should conceive it to be really laughable to find, that he

argues as if he seriously believed that the British constitution would receive no injury from the grant of all that the Catholics wish to obtain; as credit for sincerity on the opposite side of the question is no doubt expected.

But it is added, * “ The narrowness of intellect which the supposition evinces can be accounted for only by the narrow limits of the island, with which the mind in its operation sympathises, and which cuts us off from all free communication with a *more improved and wiser world.*”

If such a world there be, the great emporium of the world at large will, it is to be hoped, not be found destitute of the means of acquiring some knowledge of it, and from it, for the improvement of this nation, solitary and ignorant as it is here represented to be. But perhaps this more improved and wiser world is divided from us by merely the Straits of Dover. If so, with that (or any other yet known) Britain need not withdraw herself from the comparison, should she at any time condescend to enter into it.

Whether the progress of improvement and wisdom can rationally be measured by the interval that separates religion from policy, would, not many years ago, have been considered as too absurd to inquire; and may yet be doubted. The experimental proof has been too short in its duration to be very decisive; though, as far as it has gone, the results are not the most favourable to the hypothesis. It does not yet appear, that the political discarding of that

principle, upon which all the faith of compact, and all the benevolent regards of mutual welfare, depend, is either improvement or wisdom; and, till it does *experimentally* so appear, it may, without dogmatizing, be denied, that any permanent or truly beneficial system of policy can be formed without having its basis in religion. Such at least was the belief of the great lawgivers of antiquity, and of those who have profited mankind the most in modern times; and more especially those to whom Britain is indebted for her constitution. This last circumstance will make it the less surprising to the Hon. Author of *The Considerations* that he should have found Englishmen peculiarly prone to give to political debates what he is pleased to term "a seasoning of religious controversy;" (p. 130;) and though he doubts whether there be more of the vital spirit of religion in this than in other countries, it may be inferred, reasonably, that there is; for men do not commonly bring industriously into a debate that, on which they are not persuaded a general and forcible stress is laid, and to which they themselves do not attach great importance.

The idea of excluding religious from political considerations (as the human mind is apt to seek a resource, in one extreme, from evils felt by the other) arose, so far, naturally, from the horrors of persecution, which one religious sect, and, above all, the church of Rome, has, from time to time, unhappily carried on against another. And if it must with sorrow be confessed, that even some of the first reformers of the church of England could not immediately so

divest themselves of the habitual influence of the spirit of the Romish church, as not to think they ought to suppress error by force, it is still greatly to the honour of the church of England that she led the way to toleration; and that no other has been more eminently distinguished by it. The restrictions imposed on other sects, for two centuries past, have been such, mostly, if not wholly, as have been conceived to be of political necessity; if religious principles have been referred to, they have in general been so as a criterion of the political; and this was sufficient, as the constitution of the country was thereby secured. But although the policy and the religion of a country may, in theory, be considered as distinctly as the soul and the body, in practice they are so necessarily connected, that, even whilst they are united, the harmony of the movements, and the combined and salutary efficiency of the one, depend upon, and are proportioned to, the perfection of the other, and that they cannot be separated without the dissolution of both. The union and order of society must be preserved either by principle or by force. If the constituent parts do not coalesce by a reciprocal attraction, they cannot be held together but by compression. But there is no compression which can consolidate; this can be the effect only of powerful affinities. Now there is no other principle of the human mind, but a religious one, which will produce this generally reciprocal tendency of the individuals in society, necessary to its real strength, and more especially to its happiness. I speak of religious principle as truly such,

and not a principle of that artifice, in the conduct of public affairs, to which, by an unhappy abuse of the term, the name of policy has been given. Take away the religious principle, and what becomes of public or private confidence ; of the consideration of the governors for the governed, or attachment of the governed to their governors, or to each other ? After that the respect for religion, even a Pagan one, was destroyed in the army of the Romans, they set up the empire to auction. It may also be observed, that Machiavel has, in his Prince, left (what it is, probably, but doing him justice to say, he intended to be so) a warning of what is to be expected from that species of policy, which has nothing to do with religion.

In the present case, the question is, properly, not what have politics to do with religion ? but, what has religion, and particularly that of the Romish church, to do with politics ? Does that church, or does it not, teach and enforce, *as much as in it lies*, principles dangerous to a Protestant government, and such as Protestants, of the church of England cannot with a safe conscience give any encouragement to ? I say, *as much as in it lies*, not only because that circumstances are necessary to favour the propagation of any peculiar doctrines ; but that the argument has of late been most unlogically reversed. It has been, during this discussion, almost continually argued, that, as in the present state of the world, the Papal See does not insist so much upon its doctrines of *exterminating* Protestants, and deposing Princes, that it *therefore* is no longer to be

feared that it ever should do so; but that it may be safely relied upon that it will leave its musty decrees to lie unfolded, and no more disturb the dust with which they lie covered on the shelves of the Vatican; will suffer them to repose in harmless tranquillity, and consign them to perpetual oblivion. It were much to be desired it might be so; but, where power is the stimulus, is it to be seriously expected, that a body, closely and firmly compact in itself, and acting continually by a deep and versatile policy, would not industriously rummage the shelves for authorities to establish, or promote, any important object, should the circumstances of the times admit an idea of any deference to them? It has already been too often done, to suffer it to be a doubt. Of the probability of the recurrence of such times, thus much may be said; that infidelity tends rapidly to bring on ignorance, and ignorance superstition. The times of infidelity are already but too apparent; and they certainly lead to those, which favour the growth and influence of superstition. Whenever such times may come, they will not require any drudgery of investigation. The same authority that has empowered a Pope to confirm the Concordat, will with equal facility enable him, or any of his successors, to rescind it. It will suffice to turn to the decree of the last day of the last session of the Council of Trent, for a full authority, ample and tremendously adequate to the purpose*. "If," says the decree, "any dif-

* *Quod si in his recipiendis aliqua difficultas oriatur, aut aliqua incidere, quæ declarationem, quod non credit, aut defini-*

ficulty as to the reception or observance" (of the decrees of the council) "should arise, or any should perchance require illustration, which it" (the council) "does not believe will be necessary or limitation, exclusive of the remedies appointed in this council, the sacred synod trusts, that the most holy Roman Pontiff will take care to consult for the glory of God, and the tranquillity of the church, either by assembling (from those provinces, especially, where the difficulty arises) such persons as he shall judge necessary for the business; or even, if he shall think it expedient, by assembling a general council, or *by whatever mode he may deem more commodious.*"

If a comment on the last clause be necessary, none can be more illustrative than the Bulls of Pius IV. issued almost immediately after the termination of the council. In *the first* of these, he assumes to himself *the sole right of interpreting* the decrees of the council; and in another, soon after, that of abolishing all privileges and grants which were contrary to those decrees, of which he made *himself* the *interpreter*, by an authority termed apostolical, a term certainly not intended to convey any idea of *limitation* or *fallibility*, and this, "notwithstanding any constitutions or decrees apostolical, or statutes, &c. *even*

tionem postulant, præter alia remedia in hoc concilio instituta confidit sancta synodus, beatissimum Romanum Pontificem curaturum, ut vel evocatis iis quos eidem negotio tractando viderit expedire, vel etiam concilii generalis celebrationis celebratione, si necessarium judicaverit, vel commodiore quacunque ratione ei visum fuerit, provinciarum necessitatibus pro Dei gloria et ecclesiæ tranquillitate consulatur.—*Sess. 25, Die quarto.*

confirmed by oath, privileges, indulgences, letters apostolical, or any thing else to the contrary."

It is unnecessary to go further. The council had cautiously introduced saving clauses to preserve the power of the Pontificate entire, without defining what that power was. It being therefore left *unlimited*, and asserted immediately to the extent marked by the Bulls just quoted; what is there to which it may not be conceived to reach and apply, wherever it is acknowledged, and whenever occasion may give it scope for action? It may not act, it may be repressed; but it neither is, nor can be, insensible of its pretensions, or inattentive to the scope for action. Nor is it inexpert to seize advantage, or inert in the use of it. Whether then the Pope be deemed infallible, or not, the authority of the See of Rome has been, and may be, held to be unlimited by its adherents; because that (which is the same thing in effect) it is left undefined; and that the sanction of its anathemas is believed to be so perfect, as to exclude from salvation by a *judicial* exertion of that authority. What other power then, with which it can possibly interfere, can safely regard it without jealousy, or cherish it without danger? Nor does the evil rest here. A delegation of the same power subsists virtually in every priest, by the power of refusing absolution, or granting it, except in reserved cases, according to his own discretion; by which means the ignorant may be compelled, or encouraged, to disloyal acts, by any who are disaffected of the clergy, and it pass as the indiscretion of the priest only. The effects hereof may be seen even

where disloyalty was not concerned, in the result of a late trial in Ireland, where the victim of such a discretionary use of the priest's power had happily the means, and the good sense, to apply to the laws of his country for redress. In the church of England, if a clergyman refuse to administer the sacrament, he is obliged to notify the cause to his ordinary within fourteen days ; and therefore the ordinary, if he ratify it, becomes responsible *to the state* ; and, if the cause be not clearly proved to be sufficient, an action will lie for the injury. In the church of Rome the necessity for a similar regulation is tenfold, and it has therefore fortified itself against it, with the whole force of its spiritual artillery.

It may be worth while to observe the mode in which this spiritual artillery was used by Pius the Fourth himself. " Let him, whoever he be, that shall presume to infringe upon this * Bull, know," (such are his words) " that he will incur the wrath of Almighty God, and of the blessed Peter and Paul, his apostles." I am well aware that the decrees of the council of Trent, and the Bull of the Pope, where they interfered in several points as to civil rights, and the authority of Princes, were resisted openly by the government of France, and secretly by Spain ; but, if the See of Rome could not enforce them there,

* Nulli ergo omnino hominum liceat hanc paginam nostri declarationis, statuti, ordinationis, et decreti infringere, vel ei auso temerario contraire. Si quis autem hoc attentare præsumpserit indignationem omnipotentis Dei, ac beatorum Petri et Pauli apostolorum ejus, se noverit incursurum.—*Bull for the Revoking of Privileges.*

it did so wherever it could. And what less than infallibility does the Pope, by this very denunciation, arrogate to himself? Whatever may have been resisted in temporals, the power that denominates itself Apostolic, and presumes that the wrath of Heaven fulminates wherever he points out the object, claims a prerogative, which those who admit may well consider as that of infallibility; and however this claim may have been resisted in temporals, in spirituals little, very little, if any thing, short of its full force seems to be admitted by every one of the Romish communion*. In this respect, also, the Romish church is more dangerous to a state than others, that its assumed spiritual power, emanating from the Pope, works through the general body to its remotest extremities, decisively and uniformly, whithersoever it be directed; and it is the result of the experience of every state, in which it has been permitted to take its course, that its object has been so much more of a temporal, than a spiritual nature; that it has endeavoured constantly to obtain the whole direction of both, and too often fatally succeeded. But the Hon. Author of *The Consider-*

* The doctrine of infallibility does indeed take various shapes, and adapts its form to the occasion, and the person to whom the doctrine represented. To the ignorant it is involved in obscurity, and appears indefinite in its extent to any degree, to which the gloomy medium of superstition can magnify the imaginary representation. To the casuist it is presented in the more circumscribed dimensions of an assurance, that the church of Rome cannot so far fall away from Christianity, as to teach or adopt any fundamental error. The difference is, however, more in the words, than the reality.

rations, in answer to the objection, *that the constitution in church and state might be exposed to some hazard, by the admission of the Roman Catholics to power*, replies, "If I am not a knave, this reasoning, if just, proves me, at least, to be a fool, since it supposes me weak enough to admit, as essential points of belief, any tenets whereby the constitution of the country could be endangered."—P. 43.

Whatever it may prove, it is an incontrovertible fact, that the belief of the Papal power's being of divine authority, in its enormous assumed extent, has intruded on the constitution of every government wherein it has had power. The approbation or disapprobation of the church determined, in a great measure, the loyalty or disloyalty of the people; whilst, by means of the monastic orders, its influence reached to every individual speedily and surely. The church of Rome had an interest ever distinct from, and often opposed to, that of the states with which it had to do; and particularly in drawing money, and in promoting its favourites. To serve this interest, the monastic institutions were the most powerful engines a deep and vigilant policy could have invented. They afforded numbers, who had leisure sufficient to pervade all stations, even the recesses of obscure life, to impress individually, and continually, upon their adherents, the purports of their mission; who could, whenever the ambition of a Pope demanded it, instantaneously raise the standard of rebellion from one end of a kingdom to the other. How far it was folly in those who, taught to believe that their eternal welfare depended upon

their obedience to the See of Rome, were ready to give up every temporal advantage that stood opposed to it, is not the question. The fact is, they were ready to act upon the principle; and *if the principle had been well founded*, though perhaps not according to the wisdom of the world, it would have been acting gloriously. The ignorant, that is, the great majority of mankind, can act, in public affairs, only from instruction; and if the instructors be a politically close connected body, with an interest distinct from that of the state, then, at what time soever the two interests shall clash, that of the state cannot but be infallibly injured. That this has been the case in Ireland, has been the too-fatal experience for many years. The clergy of the Romish church, in that kingdom, have a double interest distinct from that of the state: the interest of spiritual promotion by the authority of the church of Rome, and the interest of temporal emolument, partly dependent upon the number and zeal of followers, and partly expectant of such a change of the political system, as might give them temporal possessions of a less uncertain tenure and value. These interests, natural in themselves to man, and, whilst the moral principle of the individual and the safety of the state are not endangered by them, not only allowable, but sometimes laudable, are unfortunately, by the policy of the See of Rome, so bound to its will, so determined by its decisions, and so powerful in the energy and extent of their agency, that hitherto, at least, they could not be safely encouraged by a Protestant state.

It is true these interests ought not to be considered

as merely temporal in their motives, but as originating, or, at least supported and enforced by the professed religious principle, the most beneficial of all principles when well directed, and the most dangerous when otherwise. On this subject it may not be improper to make a few observations, which may lead to the ascertainment of the true origin of the power and policy, and of the most distinguishing religious tenets of the church of Rome.

Whoever (and of whatever religious denomination he may be) undertakes to convert others to the principles of his religious persuasion, or to instruct those who have already embraced them, will necessarily be zealous in the endeavour, in proportion to the sincerity of his belief of their truth, and their necessity to salvation, and in proportion to the natural temperament of the man, if the motive be purely religious. If it be purely a political motive, his zeal will be in proportion to the political expediency, and the natural temperament; whether the expediency be the temporal advantage of the individual solely, or the individual share of the temporal advantage of a political society. Of these motives, the latter, though it may subsist purely as such in a few individuals, can never be that which will originally unite and consolidate an association, because that *expediency* is in itself a principle of discordance from the moment (whenever it be) that the general security will permit the individual advantage to be separately considered. The religious motive, purely such, is, on the contrary, the strongest and most lasting bond of union, the most decisive in determining the modes of action, and

the most powerful stimulant to exertion; because the interest it proposes, and the obligation believed to be enforced by it, are as immensity to an atom, when considered as in comparison with the whole combination and sum of every other. Moreover, as the very ground and origin of this motive is a thorough and firm belief of the reality of such infinite interest, and paramount obligation; without such belief, or the means of introducing and confirming it, the political motive, as an original one, is totally inefficient. But, on the other hand, where the belief exists previously, there the political motive may work with it, as the most potent engine to guide and direct the public mind to the amplification of influence, and the establishment and consolidation of authority. That a popular persuasion of any kind may by policy be made to produce great effects is true; but the political effect will neither be equable nor permanent, unless the persuasion itself be founded on principles that are so. It is for this reason that the influence of the enthusiasm of popular leaders has seldom produced lasting effects, and is not in itself capable of being continued beyond the time of their credit. Attached to the person, or his success, with either it falls away. But, on the other hand, where it is fixed by a general principle in the people; and where the power resides, not in an individual solely, but in a political body, essentially, with an efficient head; when it has been once established, then the stronger and the more intimate the connecting principle, and the more decisive and extensive its efficiency, the more permanent will be its duration. The power of Alexander termi-

nated its career with himself, and was broken into subdivisions which preyed upon each other, and finally fell under the superior policy of the Romans. If that acquired by Julius Cæsar was of longer duration under the Emperors, it was because the habitual policy of the senate, and the influence of its authority on the public mind, could not be easily eradicated; though its power of efficient and immediate control was annihilated by the Emperors. The power of the senate was, on the contrary, unshaken whilst Rome had an enemy to fear; and would probably have so continued much longer, had not the Romans, in their rage for conquest, by creating perpetual Dictators, and granting the consulate successively to the same Generals, transferred the allegiance of the armies from the senate to the Generals. The policy of the senate was the combined result of the experience of men grown grey in active employment, in embassies and in warfare abroad, and in political discussion and situations of responsibility at home. It was consolidated by that necessity of self-defence, which the original spirit of depredation imposed upon them; and their success, by which alone they could hope to exist as a nation, as necessarily kept it alive in its full vigour (suffering no other principle to detract from its effect), under the name of patriotism. To defend their plunder, and their country, was the same; and the most subtle artifice and profligate conquest their highest policy. Secure of the general feeling of the people, the senate directed it with profound skill and address; and, whilst it preserved its own power, destroyed that of every nation within its reach. When that was done,

and Rome had no rival to fear, having no determined regular head, it has necessarily preyed upon itself, and became subject to the first whose influence with the army would enable him to seize upon the whole of its authority, and become absolute. But, however the form of governments may change, it is to be seen that the *original principles*, by which any nation was established, will in some degree remain through every succeeding form, and be at least a prominent characteristic feature. Maxims of jurisprudence, and popular opinions, traditions, and prejudices, are not to be obliterated, till the nation, on which they have at an early period been impressed, is blended and confounded with others. They may be modified, but this seems to be the utmost. This has been the case with the Saxon laws in England, notwithstanding the Norman Conquest; and with the civil law in France, notwithstanding the Revolution. In Rome, the refined policy and the religious ideas of ancient Rome have in a similar manner descended even to the present age. In each of these respects *, *it was, and is not, and yet is.*

When its military power was destroyed, and it no longer able to subdue by arms, the influence of Christianity was made subservient to the acquisition of a power, of a different kind indeed, but no less real, as a source of wealth, aggrandisement, and of dominion, over every temporal power. To this end nothing could contribute more effectually than that the clergy of all Christian churches should consider

* Revelations, chap. 17. ver. 8.

the Bishop of the imperial city as their spiritual head; in like manner as the Emperor was temporal head of his dominions. The place of his residence furnished an analogy, readily conceived, and not difficult to impress; especially by the aid of a substitution of the *unity of the government of the church*, for the *unity of its doctrines*. The ignorance of the converted barbarians was not likely to distinguish much between them, neither did they do so.

The authority of the Pope being thus asserted, and propped by texts of Scripture, which ignorance only could receive as authorizing it, the system of monastic institutions offered the means of fixing a spiritual legion in every district, that should be ever on the alert, and totally devoted to the one interest of Rome, preserve a continued chain of communication with the head, and a constant submission within its range; and they yielded not to their legionary predecessors in perseverance or success. They laid Europe in bonds at the footstool of the Pontiff.

When to these means was added that of the clergy being the sole depositaries of the Scriptures, (which, if read by the laity, would soon have discovered how weak and unfounded were the pretensions of the See of Rome to such a power, and how erroneous most of its peculiar doctrines, as the people at large soon did at the time of the Reformation,) the depth and extent of its policy could require nothing more than actual force to give it all that policy can give.

But personally to employ actual force was an inconsistency with the ecclesiastical character, too glaring for general adoption; and therefore the exe-

cution of its anathemas was committed to the laity, who, in all the zeal of ignorance and phrensy of superstition, were ambitious to signalize themselves in the extirpation of those denounced as heretics; whilst the holy See saw with pleasure, and applauded the atrocities of the Inquisitor Torquemada, the ravages of the Duke of Alva, and the massacre of the Eve of Saint Bartholomew.

How a policy so unprincipled, and so ferocious in itself, and so directly in opposition to the mild, humane, and rational doctrines of Christianity, could have found its way into the Christian church, would, if those doctrines alone were consulted, appear an enigma impossible to be solved. But ambition is a subtle casuist, and zeal will hoodwink itself. Our blessed Saviour had said *His kingdom was not of this world*, and that *they who took the sword should perish by it*; but those who were of the world found it convenient to appropriate his kingdom, and it was not inconsistent that such should wish to do so by the sword. Under the successors of Constantine the Great, instead of that salutary exercise of power which should suppress disturbances impartially, whence-soever they should arise, and confine religious zeal to the exertions of its convincing power alone, court-favour to any sect was the signal of the persecution of every other, and all felt and exerted it by turns. That this should have been the case with the Heathens from principle was to have been expected; that it should have been so with Christians is equally to be lamented and condemned. The idea of enforcing conviction was equally absurd and impious. Conviction may be

concealed, denied, or affirmed ; but it cannot be conceded to aught but what is truly felt at the time as just argumentative proof. The characters in which it is impressed are no further of human cognizance than by the outward act ; they are a testimony, whose full evidence the Most High has reserved for his own awful tribunal.

Acquisition of temporal power naturally excites the wish to extend and perpetuate it, and an elevated situation is jealous of rivals. Hence the contests between Rome, Constantinople, and Carthage, for a supremacy, for which there is not the least real foundation in Scripture, and which, if there were any other title, could belong only to Jerusalem, as a church established by our Lord himself.

It would be as tedious, as it is disgusting, to pursue the regular strides of the ambition and policy of Rome to assert her supremacy, and at length her infallibility. In her progress, though her power was thwarted by council after council, at length in the council of Trent she prevailed. The zeal for the propagation of her doctrines, and the opposing of error, was indeed always the principle upon which councils assembled ; and it is very remarkable, that an opposition to the Popes has, in the later times, generally been followed by a hecatomb of those of the reformed churches as a peace-offering.

A distinction has been taken between the court of Rome, and the church of Rome ; and it is so far just, that, nearly allied as the policy of Rome itself and the doctrines of that church are, they may be considered distinctly, and have frequently been so. Henry the

Eighth certainly did so when he assumed the supremacy, without departing from any of its religious doctrines, unless that supremacy be held as an article of the faith. And there have been, and probably are, numbers, who, though they adhere to what are considered as articles of faith, differ from the court of Rome as to their sentiments of its policy. But there is also a number, and probably a very serious majority, who go hand in hand with Rome in policy as well as faith. Perhaps it would not be too much to say the lower orders of the laity en masse, and many of the lower orders of the priests, whose knowledge may be but one degree above their's, and with whom Rome appears to be every thing. The Gallican church is in some degree an exception, but of this I shall have occasion to speak more particularly hereafter. And notwithstanding this exception, the general position is of importance, as it leads to an adequate idea of the influence of Rome.

In the contest between the Emperors and the Popes, when the assumed spiritual power was deemed valid, and, as to futurity, scarcely distinguished from omnipotence, the cautious and enterprising policy, which long before had in Hildebrand subjugated the churches of France, displayed its full force in the thunder of its anathemas, and the degradation of sovereigns. But when the validity of its assumed powers was questioned, when its authority was weighed in the balance of the Gospel and found wanting, the Gospel was burned, the reformed were burned, crusades against the reformed were proclaimed, inquisitions were instituted; all that the rage of illegal power, trembling

for itself, could suggest, was put in action. Had that power been legal, would it have acted so? Most assuredly not. There is that in a consciousness of truth and rectitude which feels its own security, and fears no scrutiny. It is firm, but seldom, if ever, violent.

This violence, though it impeded, was not suffered by Divine Providence to suppress, the Reformation; and though the decrees established by it have not latterly been put in act, they are not repealed. Hence therefore it is necessary to recur to them, to see what is still of force, though not in use, because they constitute a part of that policy against which it is necessary the Protestant should ever be on his guard *till it is so no more*. Neither is it less necessary to the Protestant to bear in mind the power which is claimed and has been exerted by the Popes, as to their decrees, and the extent of their influence, since it cannot be ascertained that it will not again be resorted to, and with an effect dangerous to his religion and his liberties.

As some of these, though often referred to, are but little known in general, they are here given as worthy of particular attention, for the marks they bear of the temper of the church that issued them at the time, and of that which is not inconsistent with its policy perhaps at any time.

The fourth council of Lateran was assembled A. D. 1215. One principal object thereof was to suppress the Albigenses; a sect, which, opposing the doctrines of infant baptism, the Mass, prayers for the dead, worship of the cross, was, says Millot, "accused, *though without proof*, (as the first Christians were by the Jews,

and afterwards the Jews by the Christians,) either of sacrificing children, or committing the most abominable excesses at their nocturnal assemblies." These calumnies have not been suffered to drop. The temper of the calumniators will however be pretty evident from the following Canons of that council * :—

CANON III.—“ Let the secular powers of every rank whatsoever be advised and persuaded, or, if necessary, compelled by ecclesiastical censure, as they wish to be held and accounted of the number of the faithful, *to make oath publicly*, that in defence of the faith, that they *will sincerely and with all their power labour to expel all such as are noted by the church as*

* Moneantur autem et inducantur, et si necesse fuerit, censurâ ecclesiasticâ compellantur seculares potestates cujuscunque officii, etiam sicut reputari cupiunt et haberi fideles, ita pro defensione fidei præstent publicè juramentum, quod de terris, suæ jurisdictioni subjectis, universos hæreticos ab ecclesiâ denotatos bonâ fide pro viribus exterminare studeant, ita quod a modo quandocunque quis fuerit in potestatem sive spiritualem, sive temporalem assumptus, hoc teneatur capitulum firmare.

Si verò dominus spiritualis requisitus et monitus ab ecclesiâ terram suam purgare neglexerit ab hac hæreticâ scditate, per metropolitanum et comprovinciales episcopos excommunicationis vinculo innodetur. Et si satisfacere contempserit infra annum, significetur hoc summo Pontifici, ut ex tunc ipse vassallos ab ejus fidelitate denunciaret absolutos, et terram exponat Catholicis occupandam, qui eam, exterminatis hæreticis, sine ullâ contradictione possideant, et in fidei puritate conservent, salvo jure domini principalis, dummodo super hoc ipse nullum præstet obstaculum, nec aliquod impedimentum opponat; eâdem nihilominus lege servatâ circa eos, qui non habent dominos principales.—*Concil. Lat. 4^m. Can. 4. Vide Carranzæ Summa Can. Ed. Lugduni, 1601. p. 423.*

heretics from the territories subject to their jurisdiction. So that henceforward, whosoever shall be set in any office, whether spiritual or temporal, may be bound to confirm this article.

“ If however the temporal lord, when required and admonished by the church, neglect to free his territory from this heretical foulness, let him be excommunicated by the Metropolitan and Bishops of the province. And if he neglect to make a satisfaction within the year, let this be signified to the Pope, that *he may declare his vassals from that time absolved from their allegiance to him, and give his territory to be occupied by Catholics*, who, having exterminated the heretics, may possess it, and preserve it in the purity of the faith; saving the rights of the lord paramount, provided that he oppose no obstacle or impediment. The same law nevertheless being observed as to those who have no lords paramount.”

This Canon then confirms the doctrine that the Pope has power to dispense with oaths of allegiance; it enjoins the extermination of those who dissent from the church of Rome, in the literal sense of the word *extermination*, that is, *expulsion from the territories of Roman Catholics*, and that all who undertake any office, spiritual or temporal, should *take an oath to do their utmost to exterminate them*. Such an oath then having been taken, is a full justification of the Protestants when they object to those, who have taken it, the principle of not keeping faith with them. For what reliance can there be, if it is held that the Pope, or any one else, can dispense with

such an oath as that of allegiance, or with any oath, whatsoever it be ? Certainly none.

The natural effect of such a Canon was such as must have been foreseen, so far as that it must have brought on a contest, in which, if it were maintained to the utmost, one of the parties must have been utterly ruined. The party to be so must also have been, in the conception of those who established the canon, the reformed. If it were not the very essence of enthusiasm and superstition to discard and reject the appeal to reason and common sense, it would excite astonishment that any portion of mankind could be induced to believe that the Deity had ever empowered any of his creatures thus to dissolve fundamental principles of moral obligation. Nevertheless it was the general belief of the Romish church, and, as it affected those who differed in doctrine from that church, at least was steadily adhered to in general, and the practice was conformable to it, till the last century, when the diffusion of information lessened the respect paid to it, and the execrable treatment of the innocent Calas and his family created a disgust throughout Europe at the principles which excited it.

From the time that this Canon was enacted, to that of the council of Trent, the manner in which the Papal excommunications were employed was frequently such as to raise opposition from sovereigns of the Romish religion, and in this country particularly, as it was oppressed by exactions for Rome, and foreigners intruded into the most lu-

crative stations in the church. It required no great share of common sense to see that religion was made the stalking-horse of ambition and avarice. But it required a knowledge, which those times did not possess, to define the true nature of episcopal power. The idea of it was confused, and, though the natural right of self-defence obliged the Sovereigns to oppose the Popes, they did it with a reluctance which was always injurious to themselves. Of this the Popes were perfectly aware, and did not fail to convert the prejudice to their advantage.

In England, happily for it, the deference of its Kings, from the time of William the Conqueror, was not always very submissive. The rough grasp of the Norman line would cede nothing of the sway of the sceptre to Papal pretensions. Neither of the Williams *would let the Papacy reach to them*. It was by means of those whose title to the crown was disputable, both here and in France, that Rome was able to extend and establish power. To Henry I. Stephen, and John, the whole influence of the favour of the church was necessary, and Rome did not lose the occasion of profiting by it.

The idea of the Papal power, at the time, was the most extravagant. The multitude, taught to believe it in the most literal, though false acceptance of absolving or condemning, were panic-struck with dread of it; and even men of the boldest minds deferred to it, and sometimes found it convenient to obtain so accredited an absolution from oaths. Rome, however, had it ever in view to subject the whole of the

clergy to itself entirely. Hence it first introduced *Appeals to Rome*. This was a protection to them frequently found beneficial, and particularly to a rebellious subject, who could thus make his cause the cause of the church. But it would have been of small advantage, without those master-strokes of policy, the exempting the whole body of the clergy from the temporal tribunal; the cutting them off from the temporal charities of life, by celibacy; and the extent of the secrecy of the confessional, by which it was informed of the secrets of others, without disclosing its own, and the reservation to itself of the ratification of spiritual promotion. Of these three, the first was by far the most important. It was a concession that enervated the arm of the sovereign, took half its sway from the sceptre of justice, and obtruncated the municipal rights, and legislative authority, of every country that was unwise enough to admit of it. The ambition and policy of Rome, when thus far was unhappily obtained, was however soon found, even by the clergy of England, to have somewhat more than merely spiritual advantage in view; and that England, when bound to her altar, was to exhaust its vitality for her favourites to banquet on it. The clergy of England in vain remonstrated against her rapacious exactions, and the intrusion of foreigners; neither could it quite forget the liberty it had enjoyed, or that it owed some duties to the state. But its bonds were too strong to be broken by the breath of remonstrance.

In the reign of the violent and unprincipled John, its sufferings were moreover aggravated to a calami-

tous distress by his extortions; and the ferocity with which he plundered it naturally made it seek its security in joining the Barons; and thus united they obtained Magna Charta. This circumstance has been much insisted on as a proof that the Romish religion is favourable to, or at least not inconsistent with, the British constitution. Let it then be considered whether that religion, *as such*, did favour it; and whether it proves any thing more, than that, when power is exerted in an oppressive and arbitrary manner, it will rouse a spirit of resistance. The mind of King John, unhappily for himself, was too much bent on commanding, to trouble itself much with the study of the art of government, and probably, as weak or ignorant men are apt to confound the two, he was not aware of the very essential difference that subsists between them. He appears to have been equally destitute of foresight and proper resource; and therefore, in difficulty, hurried on to embrace inconsiderate measures to remedy inconsiderate conduct. But still the evils of his reign originated not less with Rome than with himself. The Pope had determined to intrude Stephen Langton into the See of Canterbury, contrary to the avowed disapprobation of John; and John, very naturally and rightly, as to the principle, opposed it. Thus the power of the King of England and of the Pope were brought to a trial of strength. Irritated by the King's opposition, the Pope laid the kingdom under an interdict, which taught the King's subjects to withdraw their allegiance, and made them rise against him. The King at length, to appease the Pope, was

forced not only to receive Langton, but to make the Pope the Lord Paramount of his kingdom, and to do homage to him for it; which he did in the hope of regaining the attachment of his subjects. But attachment or confidence, once really lost, are not easily recovered; neither did he pursue the means to regain them. When he was forced at length to confirm the Charter, which, singularly enough, was brought to light by Langton, what was the conduct of Rome? *It declared the Charter void, and absolved the King from his oath, and afterwards excommunicated the Barons who insisted on the observation, and Langton himself, for not permitting the excommunication to be denounced.*

The conduct of the Archbishop in the whole of this business appears to have been that of a great and good man. That he should have agreed to the clause in Magna Charta, which forbids the alienation of lands in mortmain, a clause the most objectionable to Rome, was equally to the honour of his patriotism and of his sagacity, which perceived that this was, in that state of things, the only check to prevent the whole property of the kingdom from being a fee-farm to the Popes, and this was perhaps the most that the debased and bigoted spirit of the times would admit of; if indeed the idea of asserting the independence of his See on Rome had occurred to him, which it does not seem to have done.

Enough has now been said to prove, that the Romish religion, *as such*, and more especially the See of Rome, was absolutely inimical to the confirmation of Magna Charta, and that the confirmation was merely

the result of one of those providential combinations of events, which astonishingly contribute to mark epochs in the revolution of human transactions.

The excommunication of the Barons gave the nation a disgust to the Romish clergy, whose tergiversation shewed it to be the servile instrument of Rome ; and thus prepared the public mind, by fixing its attention on the conduct of the church, and comparing it even with the little then known of Christian principle, to receive with avidity that discovery of Wickliff*, for such, alas ! in those days, it might too

* Wickliff, in this respect, nobly led the way, and, it may be collected from the following passage in Walsingham, that, in the disputation at Oxford, the Romish divines were very ready, as usual, to condemn him, and very unable to confute him.

Qui nec ipsis dominis regnique principibus se obtemperare devoverant, donec excessus ipsius Heresiarchæ punivissent juxta mandata Papalia, a facie cujusdam, nec nobilis militis—Ludovici de Clifford pomposè vetantis, ne præsumerent aliquid contra ipsum Johannem sententialiter definire, tanto timore concussi sunt ut cornibus eos carere putares, factos velut homo non audiens, et non habens in ore suo redargutiones.—*P. 205. ed. Camden.*

“ They, who had vowed that, until they had punished the Heresiarch according to the Papal mandates, they would not yield to the Lords or Princes of the kingdom, nor to the noble and martial Lewis de Clifford’s injunctions not to proceed to definitive sentence against the said John, were so struck with terror, that they seemed to have been deprived of their faculties, and as a man that heareth not, in whose mouth there is no answer to refute his adversary.”

The truth is, that Wickliff could not, in his principal positions, be refuted ; and whether he maintained all that is laid to his charge, may, at least, be doubted, as the representations of his enemies. One of the charges exhibited against his tenets,

justly have been termed, that the Gospel gave no authority to the supremacy of the Popes, or the usurpations and abuses of power they had so fatally exercised.

Happily for England, the Barons firmly retained the privileges asserted by Magna Charta, and new barriers were opposed to the depredations and intrusions of Rome by a Prince, who, in the crusades, had learned, from a nearer view, to estimate its policy more truly ; Edward I. In this he was imitated by his successors, till the deadly blow to the Papal supremacy, as to England, was given by Henry VIII. ; a blow, which not all his fiery zeal for the doctrines of the Romish church could expiate. And, indeed, how could it ? He thereby made the clergy of that church amenable to the laws of their country only ; and, what was still worse, made a Papal interdict impossible to be carried into effect !

It remains to be observed, that these disputes were carried on between parties who agreed as to faith, and that, therefore, it does not follow, that, the one Romish party having rescued from the other somewhat in favour of general rights, a Romish party should be equally zealous in joining a party of a

in the Council of Constance, is, that he asserted that *God should obey the devil*. Now, from the whole of Wickliff's doctrine, it is pretty evident, that part of the assertion made by him miscarried somewhere on its way to the Council, and that Wickliff's assertion was, more probably, that *if God was to confirm ALL the decrees of the Popes, he must obey the devil*, which he might say upon the general principle that all evil is of the devil.

different religious persuasion, in the maintenance of those rights, should they, in any respect, militate against the favourite tenets and prejudices of their own.

During the whole of this period, the Canon above quoted was followed with unrelenting cruelty; and even towards the end of it, one of the Censurers on Erasmus's Commentary on the New Testament, by the Faculty of Theology in Paris, begins as thus:—"Whereas it is a Catholic principle, and to be held faithfully, that it is not only lawful, but a duty to inflict death on obstinate heretics, *when it can be done without endangering the state, &c.* *."

Hence, also, the Bull of Deposition against Queen Elizabeth. As to this, it has been observed "that the Bull of Pope Pius the Fifth contains not a word about the subjects rising in arms and murdering her," though it is admitted that it was a Bull of Excommunication.

I am not casuist enough to perceive clearly the value of the distinction. That the consequence was at least risked, is sufficiently clear, even from the adage that *a deposed monarch is seldom long-lived*; nor is it easily to be imagined, that Pius could expect her to be deposed without a recourse to arms. The conduct of Felton is at least a proof how it was liable to be understood, and how it would probably have been further carried

* Cum sit Catholicum, et fide tenendum, non solum licere; sed oportere hæreticos pertinaces extremo supplicio punire, quando citra jacturam atque periculum reipublicæ id fieri potest, &c.—*Tit. xxii. Cens. 2.*

into effect, had Elizabeth been a character of less sagacity and firmness. The concluding words of the Bull, as given by Holingshed, are these; the whole I have not within my reach; but thus much is abundantly sufficient.

“ We by our injunction strictly forbid all and every of the nobility, subjects, and people, and others afore-said, to dare to obey her intimations, commands, or laws, and include all, who shall so dare, in the same anathema with her. All those who have in whatsoever manner taken an oath of allegiance to her, we *declare perpetually absolved from every tie whatsoever of her power over them, and of their fidelity and obedience to her* *, &c.”

It is very true. Here is not a word of rising in arms, or murdering Elizabeth. Her subjects are only required *upon pain of eternal damnation to disobey her in all things whatsoever, and to depose her*. Of course in the most harmless and tranquil manner in the world, without bloodshed or battery.

The bull therefore had nothing of *muching mallico* in it, and *meant* no mischief! As innocent in its purpose, as Campion and his accomplices were pure in their loyalty to Elizabeth. *She is my lawful Queen*,

* “ Præcipimus et interdiciamus universis et singulis proceribus, subditis, et populis, et aliis prædictis, ne illi,” (Elizabethæ) “ ejusve monitis mandatis et legibus audeant obedire: qui secus egerint eos simili anathematis sententiâ innodamus. Omnes, qui illi quomodocunque juraverunt, a juramento hujusmodi, ac omni prorsus dominii fidelitatis et obsequii debito, perpetuo absolutos declaramus, &c.”

said he, *and I obey her.* But when * it was demanded of Campion, "although the Pope did expressly command him the contrary, if he would nevertheless faithfully obey her. Oh then! *they must not so deeply enter into his conscience.*"

When this Bull had been issued, the conduct of Elizabeth towards the Roman Catholics was necessarily altered, and those who suffered, suffered not for their religious principles, as such, but because the Pope, by his Bull, had, to the utmost of his power and authority, united treasonable principles to the religious one, and so far at least made the religion treasonable. Whatever therefore were the severities attributed to that truly great Queen, (which never extended to fire and faggot,) she did not confound the loyal with the traitors; and the latter suffered by the law of the land, not for the religious principles, but for the treason connected with them by the Pope. What? Was a Princess, whose deep penetration and capacious mind could astonish even a Sully, to sit puling over the malignant mischief, and suffer it to gather strength? Was she to be blind to the origin, and insensible to the progress, of treason under the sanction of a Pope, and to suffer herself to be deposed? Blessed be God that she was not that idiot; that she had the sense to see, and the spirit to resist effectually, the designs of such an enemy, and of those who endeavoured to promote them. These designs were open and avowed in the face of all Europe, beyond the

* Holingshed.

power of the zeal or ingenuity of party to conceal or extenuate, and such as, had she shewn less firmness, or less exertion of the power of the laws, would most probably have succeeded.

Had it not been for this Bull, the Roman Catholics would not have been so forward to plot against her, and their peaceable conduct would have ensured her protection; for, by that which she gave to those upon whose loyalty she could depend, it is evident, as it is also from the necessity of the times, that she would have wished to extend it, had she found she could do it safely; and she did extend it, perhaps more so than the nation at large might have approved. For the nation, sensible of the inestimable blessings of religion, free from the errors that had so long debased it, and more particularly of the comfort and consolation of reading the word of God, was justly jealous of any thing which might tend to revive that thralldom of superstition, which it had cast off.

To this jealousy the Gunpowder-plot gave additional force. However it was planned, the conspirators were serious in the attempt; and it will be an eternal stigma on the church of Rome, that the secrecy of the confessional should for a moment comprehend secrecy as to treason, or any crime intended. And what visible marks were there, that would, at that time, induce the public to believe, that the principles of the Romish church had undergone any change since the Eve of Saint Bartholomew? There does not seem to have been any. So far the public opinion appears to have been justifiable. Its fears were also further justified by the unhappy wish of Charles I. to have recourse to the

aid of those of the Romish religion. From this circumstance the Roman Catholics, acquiring new hopes, were loyal to him ; but perhaps there was no one circumstance that was more injurious to his interests than his having done so. And, whatever may be thought of the present times, the conduct of the Roman Catholics, in the time of James II. justified every apprehension that had been previously entertained by the Protestants, as to the religion and the constitution of the country.

Since that time it is true, that many changes have taken place, upon the Continent especially, and perhaps among the Roman Catholics here, in the mode of considering the violent measures adopted by the policy of Rome, so that the doctrine of extermination appears to be pretty much given up. It is to be much wished it were wholly and formally so by the See of Rome itself. As to the *whole extent* of the *extermination* of those who differ in religious opinions from the Catholics, the fatal impolicy of the extermination of the Moors from Spain may possibly have been too strong a warning of the horror it has inspired throughout the world, to permit even the policy of Rome itself to wish a repetition on so large a scale. Whether that policy would object much to it on a lesser scale, (though the liberality of those who have preferred the petition would not,) may perhaps still be problematical, as Rome has not given up the principle. It is admitted that she no longer avows openly a principle of *extermination* ; she is too prudent to do so ; but it may be truly asserted that she holds a principle which may be extended to it. For she not only

anathematizes all heretics, but enjoins* *the secular arm* to “*punish* severely all those who resist the liberty, immunity, or *jurisdiction* of the church,” consequently all who differ from her.

How far this *punishment* may extend, under the name given to it of *ordinances of discipline*, may depend upon the times, the power, and the system of policy. In Spain it was to *extermination*, in France to the *massacre of St. Bartholomew*, and later still to the *dragooning of Languedoc*, &c. in England mostly to the *burning of the martyrs*. But the injunction still remains in its full force and spirit, as that of the church itself which gave it birth.

Where then was the alleged benefit to mankind, that “she herself has declared formally, that she has no power of *inflicting* sanguinary punishment in any case whatever?” Better a thousand times would it have been for the happiness of the world, that she had declared the reverse. She would then have been restrained by the odium from the acts, which, having thus screened herself, she has so remorselessly excited others to perpetrate, by her † *ordinances of discipline*.

* Admonet Imperatorum, Reges, Resp. Principes—ut severè in eos qui illius libertatem, immunitatem atque jurisdictionem impediunt, animadvertant.—*Concil. Trid. Sess. 25. cap. 20.*

† It having been said that the violation of the safe conduct is a matter that lies between the Emperor Sigismund and the magistrates of the free city of Constance, it is right to observe, that the words of the free conduct, granted by the council of Trent, do however give a very different idea, and induce the belief, that the reverend

And the perfect complacency, if not approbation, with which these are yet spoken of, forbids the sup-

fathers who composed that council thought that the council of Constance had no small share in the violation.

Insuper omni fraude et dolo exclusis, verâ et bonâ fide promittit ipsam synodum nullam vel manifeste vel occulte occasionem quæsituram, aut aliquâ auctoritate, potentiâ, jure, vel statuto, privilegis legum vel canoarum, aut quarumcunque Conciliorum, præsertim Constantiensis et Senensis—in aliquod hujus fidei publicæ et plenissimæ assecurationis—præjudicium quovis modo usuram, aut quenquam uti permisuram : quibus in hac parte pro hac vice derogat.—*Salv. Cond. Sess. 18.*

“ The council, setting aside all fraud and deceit, promises truly and faithfully, that it will neither openly nor clandestinely seek for any opportunity, or use, or permit it to be used, to any prejudice of this public pledge of faith, and fullest security, by any authority, power, right, or statute, privilege of laws, canons, or of any councils whatsoever, especially *those of Constance or Sienna, which for this instance, in this respect, it does not defer to.*”

Did then the council of Trent make an exception as to a *respect*, for which there was *no foundation*? If we are to believe the fathers of this council, they knew that there *did exist authorities for violating a safe conduct*, in the acts of the councils they have referred to. But supposing even that they were mistaken, *they have confirmed the doctrine as their own* by the exception. Holding that the authority did exist, they derogate from the authority—How?—*For that time, and, by so doing, leave it in full force to every other.* The doctrine then is so far from being repealed, that it has the sanction of the council of Trent, as far as the sanction of that council does, or can extend.

Indeed to imagine that any portion of the power of their church was abrogated, or in any degree lessened by the council of Trent, would be totally inconsistent with what is known of the temper of that council, or of the conduct of the Popes immediately after its conclusion.

position that the spirit which enjoined them is by any means extinct.

It is worse than nothing to say that *they are of force only where they are received*. The safety of Protestants requires that *they should not be received at all*, under any pretext or in any case. Until this is so, the Protestant must ever be insecure, where there is the power to put them in force.

Once for all, be it permitted here to consider how partial and inadequate any other appeal than that to the articles and canons of the church of Rome must be, as to the questions agitated concerning the doctrines maintained by the Roman Catholics. What the doctrines of any church, as such, are, can be known, *so as to be relied upon*, only by its articles and canons. They are the code of its legislation; and though, as in every other code, there may be points, which may be suffered to lie dormant, interpreted occasionally with lenity, or wished abrogated by individuals; still, whilst the letter of the statute subsists unaltered, it is in force, and nothing but *the formal repeal by the competent power* annuls it.

Hence then it follows, that the opinions and actions of individuals may vary considerably, without affecting the force of the law; that individuals of one age may not persecute, nor wish it, and yet that those of the next may do it with all their might, and not act contrary to the decrees of the church of Rome. The divines or universities of that church individually may declare their opinions, that faith ought to be kept with those whom they esteem as heretics, that

such ought not to be exterminated, and that the Pope has no power to depose Kings ; but what force is there in such declarations beyond that of *merely private opinions* ? Certainly none whatsoever. When this argument therefore is so strongly urged, let it be considered whether the See of Rome defers to such declarations before its validity be admitted.

In the various contests for power, which this See has, from the time that Christianity became the established religion of the Roman state, maintained, its conduct is marked by a persevering and * inflexible adherence to its purposes. Urged on by the insatiable lust of power, its first object was universal spiritual supremacy, and this naturally induced the extension of the wish to a political supremacy as universal.

In vain did council after council, and sovereign after sovereign, endeavour to repress its attempts. If councils opposed the Popes, the Popes did not confirm the acts that opposed their power ; nay, they frequently fulminated their anathemas against them. The Popes, having thus made themselves independent of the sovereigns, the sovereigns were first robbed of their rights of investiture, and some, at length, even of their sovereignty itself. The contest with the Gallican church is well known. It began at least as early as the ninth century, and was not con-

* A remarkable instance of this inflexibility is noticed by Mr. Villiers, in his excellent *Essay on the Effects of the Reformation*. The Romish See never acknowledged the King of Prussia formally as a King. See the note, p. 133. The whole passage is a good lesson on the subject.

cluded till *the seventeenth*. As much stress appears to have been laid on several professions, which are in reality nothing more than what was, and may yet be maintained by the Gallican church; it is necessary to introduce here the articles respecting the liberties of that church, confirmed by the French clergy in their declaration, A. D. 1682. According to * Dupin they were these.

1. " That Kings and Princes are not subject to the ecclesiastical power as to their temporals; and that they cannot be deposed directly, or indirectly, by the authority of the Keys of the church, nor their subjects absolved from the allegiance which they owe them.

2. " The decrees of the council of Constance, concerning the authority of general councils, ought to remain in force and virtue; and that the church of France does not approve † those who say that those decrees are doubtful, or that they have not been approved, or that they were made only for times of schism.

* Cent. 17. chap. 19. ed. Lond. 1724.

† Caranza's words (in his *Summa Conciliorum*) as to the councils of Basle and Constance are these. *Quæ in his duabus congregationibus, Constantiensi et Basiliensi, constituta sunt non habent aliquod authoritatis robur, nisi duntaxat illa quæ in bullâ Martini 5ⁱ. aut Nicolai 5ⁱ. Pontificiâ authoritate probata sunt.*

The acts of the two councils of Basle and Constance have no authority whatsoever, excepting such as were confirmed by Pontifical authority, in the Bull of Martin 5th. or Nicolai 5th.

These Popes certainly did not confirm the decrees, that the council was superior to, and could punish, the Popes.—*Con. Bas. Sess. 33. and Con. Const. Sess. 4.*

3. "That the use of ecclesiastical power ought to be moderated by the Canons; that the rules, customs, and laws, received in the Gallican church, ought to be observed.

4. "That although the sovereign Pontiff has the first place in matters of faith, though his decrees regard *all churches, and each in particular*, yet his judgment is not always infallible, unless it be followed with the consent of the church."

Such were the liberties asserted by the Gallican church in 1682. But if the declaration was satisfactory to France, to Rome it was as much the reverse. Almost immediately after it was made, Malagola, a Dominican, publicly defended * "the sovereignty of the Pope in temporals and spirituals;" and the Archbishop of Strigonia, in a mandate, asserted that † "the power of judging of controversies of faith, by a divine and immutable privilege belongs *solely* to the holy and apostolical See."

‡ The Pope himself was so irritated by it, (says Dupin,) that he refused Bulls for the investiture of several French Bishops who had signed it, and also refused Franchises for the King of France's Ambassadors at Rome, nor was the affair settled during the life of this Pope (Innocent XI.). His successor (Alexander VIII.) at length having obtained from the King part of the right of the Franchises, *ceased to dispute* the King's rights during the vacancies of

* Dupin Hist. of the Church, cent. 17. chap. 20.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid. chap. 19.

Sees ; and thus it was, after seven years more of contention, dropped, but still open to a revival, as it ever must be whilst a Pope is allowed to have any species of jurisdiction over another territory than his own.

With respect to these liberties, the Gallican church is distinct from the Romish church in general; and as many, if not most of the Catholic clergy of these kingdoms were probably ordained in France, those who were so may of course hold the same principles. But there may also be many others, whose principles are, on the contrary, the same with those of Father Malagola, the Archbishop of Strigonia, and perhaps the whole conclave. A distinction that seems imperiously required to be ascertained, exclusive of the consideration of the Catholic Question itself, as the principles of the latter must be much more dangerous than those of the former.

From the above articles it is very evident, that the personal safety of the King was their principal object in their being established, as the first is the only article which is absolute and definite in its expression. In the rest there is very little that is either. The second only says that the decrees of the two councils *ought* to be observed, and that the Gallican church *does not approve* those, who say they are doubtful. So likewise in the third, "the use of ecclesiastical power *ought to be* moderated, &c." whereas it is positively declared, that Kings and Princes *are not* subject, &c. A difference which clearly shews that, had it not been for the first article, the remainder would be but a poor security for these boasted liber-

ties, which, after all, the last article reduces almost to nothing. This declares that the Pope's decrees *regard* all churches, but *how far* is not specified ; and unless this had been specified, many cases might occur in which the * *ought not* would be but a feeble barrier. The Pope's judgment is indeed said *not to be always infallible*, but the exception is a truly singular one ; "*unless IT BE FOLLOWED with the consent of the church.*" This is an admirable exemplification of the Hysteron-Proteron. Had it been said, *unless he confined it to the decrees established by the consent of the church*, though the extent of the power of his Holiness might have been immoderate, still it would have known limits. Here, however, those limits are dexterously left to be ascertained *after* it has been acted on as infallible ; and therefore, though the Pope be acknowledged not to be always infallible, he is to be so considered, till the consent of the church determine otherwise !!

The truth of this business seems to have been this. The French King, alarmed for his own safety, and determined on having the Regale, found that by the assertion of the liberties of the Gallican church he could secure both ; and the clergy wishing to oblige the King, and at the same time to offend the Pope as little as possible, drew up the declaration as it stands.

* The expression *ne doit pas* is sometimes used to signify *has no right* or *no authority*. But as the French language affords direct and positive terms for the purpose, and as such are used in the first article, the singular difference of the mode of expression will justify the above inferences, that of *ne doit pas* being at least equivocal.

Else, why were not those liberties more positively asserted? I must, however, do the justice to the French clergy to add, that, when even thus far asserted, they were maintained with much firmness. But they stopped too short. They should have gone as far as Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, in the ninth century, thought those liberties ought to extend; that is, to prevent all appeals to Rome; for, till then, their liberties must have been very insecure and precarious.

With respect to Protestants, the question of policy is, what security did this declaration afford them? The question may be answered in very few words. This declaration was enregistered, and so confirmed, A.D. 1682, and in A.D. 1683, that is, three years only after this confirmation, the Edict of Nantes was revoked, and more than half a million of Protestants driven out of France by a persecution, the cruelties of which were too horrible for detail; a persecution by that King, and that clergy, who had confirmed the declaration.

This however was only an *ordinance of discipline*! I grant it. It appears to have been, like Henry VIII.'s persecution of the Protestants, intended to prove a zeal for the doctrines of the Romish faith, after a contest with the temporal power of Rome.

What assurance then is there for the Protestants, from any, or the whole of the assertions of the Gallican church, being maintained by Roman Catholics here, that if circumstances should give Rome the occasion, some one of her orders of discipline would not be issued and obeyed, when after the declaration

of the French clergy, the French Protestants were so soon subjected to all that followed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes? To say they would not be exterminated is little indeed. How much might there not be inflicted by orders of discipline, without actual extermination? Yet even in this assurance there is much weight, and I do not wish to lessen it. Very far otherwise, as a high respect is certainly due to all those who have in their own persons renounced the idea of the extermination of Protestants. *Valeat quantum valere potest.* For though it has been necessary to shew, that the restrictions upon the Roman Catholics hitherto have had just and reasonable causes, it is no part of my wish they should be continued, if the causes cease.

When therefore the Honourable Writer of *The Considerations* puts the question, with respect to the Catholics, as from a stranger, "Why a fourth part" (of the nation) "enjoy not all the rights of citizens," an answer may be given, which, to an indifferent person, would probably appear both full and equitable:—That they do enjoy all that the state has thought they could enjoy, without hazarding the safety of the rest. That it is *not allowed* that "the impression of the various causes under which the exclusion had been established have ceased to operate; and if it is perpetuated because they profess a particular religion," (p. 1.) it is because some of the principles of that religion have hitherto experimentally been found actively subversive of the constitution of the country that it has been *continued*; though it is to be hoped that those principles may

yet be so disposed of, as to permit the state to consider itself as safe, though it enlarge its concession somewhat further.

The question is said to be, "not what power has been claimed by Popes heretofore—but what power is ascribed to them by English and Irish Catholics of the present day?" This however is but a very limited and imperfect statement. The tide of public opinion has its ebbs and flows, from resistance to submission and from submission to resistance; and what is refused to-day may be yielded to-morrow, whilst the variations are within the limits of the efficiency of the general governing principle, and much more so whilst they may be caused by it, as long as the principle itself remains the same. If it is true that the spirit of the times does not yield as formerly to the direction of Rome; it is no less true, that the Canon of the council of Lateran remains unrepealed, and the censure of the Faculty of Paris on *Erasmus* gives a just and clear idea both of its force and its dormancy. At present there would be more to be lost, than gained to Rome by its being put in force. With respect to the higher orders of the Roman Catholic laity, their loyalty has been most laudably conspicuous, and will no doubt continue so. With respect to the clergy, though it has been so in some, it is far from having been so in all; and with the great majority of the laity, it has been the very reverse. Now, as the loyalty of the lower orders in Ireland does indubitably depend, in a great measure, upon the clergy, those of them who do not exert their spiritual authority, which they claim,

to the utmost of its limits, if need be, do so far abet and encourage disloyalty ; and it may therefore fairly be asked, why those excommunications, so powerful in disturbing states, should not be put in use to prevent disturbance ? It is to be hoped, that, in future, the Romish clergy may be made so far accountable for the conduct of those under their care, and over whom their influence is so great. Considering the conduct of some of them, it is very difficult to perceive much difference in their principles from those of former times ; and considering also how the laws of morality and religion depend, in the opinion of their followers, upon their statement of them, it is not a captious objection (it certainly is by no means intended here as such) to say, that the terms of the petition are not so clear or determinate as might be wished. If what is sinful or pious be determined by the plain and simple rules of revealed truth alone, and what is moral and immoral by it, and the generally received principles of civilized nations, we know what it is. The rules are ascertained with tolerable precision, and he who runs may read without much danger of a mistake. But where the laity are obliged to take their notions of revealed truth upon credit, and not permitted to read the Scriptures, these notions may be presented to them with all the sophistications of a subtle casuist, and loyalty be *a sin* to be absolved. It is indeed the pernicious abuse of the doctrines of absolution and dispensation that has been the principal cause of the jealousy and distrust with respect to the oaths of the Roman Catholics ; and the writings and practice of their

clergy have given but too much reason for the most guarded precaution. It is no alleviation of the error to say, that John Knox said, that, "neither promise nor oath can oblige man to give assistance to tyrants against God." However Knox might reason on what he conceived, though presumptuously, the Almighty would dispense with, he could not pretend *to dispense with them himself*, upon his own principles. Upon his principles the decision was necessarily *left to God*, and his hearers to their own judgment, whether the words of Knox could be borne out by his authority in the word of God, and to their own risk as to their error. Whereas, the church of Rome declares that she herself has the power of dispensing and absolving, and the laity of that church in general conceive the power to be full. There is therefore the difference between the two cases, of reasoning upon what God may pardon, and assuming the power to pardon.

Another circumstance in the Petition of considerable importance is, that the extent of the spiritual power is left undefined ; since, under the term *spiritual*, so extensive a jurisdiction has been claimed, as to invade the temporal jurisdiction in numberless instances ; and to determine its limits, it would be necessary to revise and settle them.

It cannot be overlooked, that the Papal claims and constitutions, which are the most objectionable to Protestants, are neither renounced nor repealed, and that a reservation is established, by the council of Trent, of all extreme cases to the See of Rome. What then if Rome should take upon itself to annul

the declaration, and excommunicate those who had made it, as guilty of a sinful act, till they should repent of it? Most certainly it would be a serious concern to the Protestants, upon the common principles of rational consistency, to know how the Catholics would reconcile their disobedience to a decree of the Pope, who is the medium by which their church, which they believe to be infallible, speaks; though they may not believe him personally to be so. That those of the communion, who are men of high honour and principle, would not obey the decree, it is but just to believe. But may it not also as justly be feared, that, should circumstances favour the promulgation of such a decree, and especially should the political balance incline towards it, it might produce the most disastrous effects, if salvation and loyalty were thus represented as in opposition, and that many of the clergy might be found, as not being of the Gallican church, active to promote them*? This difficulty arising from hence has been so ably stated in the letter to Dr. Troy, by Melancthon, that it is not necessary to dwell further on it here.

One observation more, however, cannot be omitted, with respect to the singular contrast between the

* Rome will not certainly exert the power she claims lightly. It must be a great and a very favourable occasion that will induce her to hazard it. It is of too much consequence not to be a *reserved case*; and she knows well enough that it concerns her credit to leave obligations of the kind in their full force, until dispensed with by herself. *So long*, therefore, they are *allowed to be binding* by all of her communion.

views as to ecclesiastical matters, exhibited in the Petition, and those by writers in favour of the Question. The Petition seems not to extend them further than such an establishment, as should not interfere with that of the Protestants. But the advocates of the Question speak of them, clearly, as directed to a participation of the property of the established church of Ireland, and similar privileges, or the same.

In order to estimate how far these views are such as a Protestant state should encourage, it will be necessary previously to consider what has been urged by the Hon. Author, in favour of the religion itself.

“The religion which we profess” (says the Hon. Author) “is what we have received from our British, or Saxon, or Norman forefathers. We went out from no church; but other churches, on motives which to them seemed sufficient, went out from us. We impute not this to them as a subject of blame; then why should we be blamed, if we steadfastly adhere to the ancient faith?”

The moderation of the sentiments expressed in the last sentence of this paragraph is such as it were to be wished were much more general. As to the imputation of blame, it presupposes an error that might have been foreseen, or known and avoided; and though it is too common to blame rashly, yet if all truth is not to be given up, error, when proved to be such, must be blamed as such. But a man, who is in error, may be so without perceiving it; and act very conscientiously on an erroneous principle. Such a man is no further liable to blame, than as he has neglected or resisted the evidence

against his error, and the consequent relinquishment of it. If he has done either, no law human or divine exculpates him from blame. Yet, though it be true, that none but the Deity can judge truly of the conscience, how far it has, or has not, been culpable; if, in argument, rational motives, and, much more, if proofs are resisted without motives, or proofs more rational being adduced to oppose them, such resistance can be resolved only into either prejudice or wilful error; and in either case blame will attach to it.

As to the argument of antiquity, as applied here to the Romish church, I must confess I have frequently been surprised that any of its advocates would enter upon it, in favour of the doctrines to which Protestants object; since it requires little more than to open the New Testament to find they have no real authority there; or than to open the works of the fathers of the three first centuries, to find that they were not the doctrines of the Christian church in their times. With those who do not, or dare not, read these, such an argument may be of force, and their number is unhappily great. What we allege is, that the doctrines, which we object to, were not the most ancient Christian doctrines in Rome itself; that they are contrary to those of Rome for the three first centuries; that they are not the doctrines of the New Testament, nor consistent with it. Thus far has been repeatedly urged. I need go no further; and I hope to prove that the doctrine of Papal infallibility and Papal power, the withholding of the Scriptures from the laity, image-worship, and transubstantiation, were all derived from Paganism, and

were originally the doctrines not of Christian but of Pagan Rome ; and these will leave them in possession of an antiquity higher even than that which is contended for.

To consider the question of religion seriously, the object must necessarily be to consider what is true, and what is false ; what is indubitably of divine authority, and what is not ; without any respect of times or persons that might lead the mind from its direct investigation ; but I am content to take the subject up in the manner proposed, and to weigh these accidents of the subject fairly to the best of my power.

If religion were respectable in proportion to its antiquity, the Jewish system would have an older claim than the Christian, and the Pagan than either ; or in this country that of the Druids, or of Odin, the religions of our British and Saxon forefathers, as prior to Christianity. Or if we are to conceive that a religion, because it was that of our forefathers, should be retained and respected, a man of scrupulous conscience may find it hard to decide, upon this principle, whether he should be a Christian or a Pagan. Is it also a merit not to go out of a church ? This might also incline him more decisively to adhere to the religion of his elder forefathers, because the latter went out of their church, when they became converts to Christianity, and he might become a Pagan.

If it be a merit not to go out of a church, or to adhere to the old one at all events, then the reverse is of course a demerit. What then are we to think

of the primitive Christians, who went out of the Jewish church? In truth, the argument has been used by the Jews against the Christians almost in every age; and it were better if left with those whom it may best become to use it—the Pagans.

From the history of Revelation, it seems to be a just inference, that the great Author of all has intended that there should be a regular progress of religious as well as physical discovery; and that in the former, no less than in the latter, there should be new circumstances brought to light, which should, as it were, mark epochs of new acquisitions of knowledge, and necessarily abolish the use of much that had previously been held of importance. Thus Judaism superseded Paganism, and Christianity Judaism, and the Reformation the errors that crept in Christianity; and possibly another Revelation may yet improve on what we hitherto know from the Gospel. But to all discoveries there will be opposition from interest, from prejudice, and from ignorance. The Ptolemaists opposed the Copernicans, the advocates of Descartes the Newtonians, and the Aristotelians the Dialectics of Locke. It is an evil scarcely separable from an adherence to system, on any other motive than the truth, and sometimes conscientiously increased by the apprehensions of those who cannot judge for themselves, lest they should fall into error.

But however this be, the Apostles and their immediate successors, who innovated upon all the preceding religious systems, paid no respect to the antiquity of any of them. Might not the Jew have

said, "Where was your religion before Christ, or where was it the other day? Ours is two thousand years old:" and the Greek have added, "Ours is a thousand years older than either. It is to our religion that the sciences and the arts owe their greatest improvements, and we are they who have taught the world the system of political liberty, given to society the first example of a free state, with all its advantages to profit by." What the answers of the Apostles would have been may be easily collected from the addresses of St. Paul to Jew and Gentile. But it may not be amiss to give the sentiments of Arnobius and Lactantius, fathers of the church of Rome itself, in the third century, upon the respect due to a religion because of its antiquity; who thus answer the Heathens, who preferred the same argument in his time. Arnobius speaks thus:—

* "When you object against us, that we forsake the religion of our forefathers, you ought to consider not *the fact*, but *the cause* of the fact—that which authorizes us to adhere to a religion is not *the date*, but *the Deity*. The point to be inquired into is, not *when* it began, but *what it was* that began. And Lactantius in like manner:—

† "They pertinaciously adhere to the religious

* Itaque cum nobis intenditis aversionem a religione priorum, *causam* convenit ut inspiciatis, non *factum*—Religionis autem auctoritas non est *tempore* aestimandum sed *numine*; nec colere *quâ die*, sed *quid* oportet intueri.—*Arnobius adv. Gentes, lib. 2.*

† Hæ sunt religiones, quas sibi a majoribus suis traditas, pertinacissimè tueri ac defendere perseverant; nec considerant quales

principles which they have received from their forefathers. *What* they are, they do not consider; but rely upon them as demonstrated truths, because they received them from their forefathers. And so great is their veneration for antiquity, that *to examine it is considered as criminal*, and it therefore has, on every occasion, the same credit as known truth."

From these extracts it is evident, that these primitive fathers trod in the steps of their predecessors, the Apostles; and proceeded upon the only proper ground of inquiry, viz. what, and where, was the truth? The latter part of the quotation from Lactantius is very important in another respect, as giving a clue to the real origin of the practice of the church of Rome in after-ages, of withholding the Scriptures from the laity, and the submission of the laity to the deprivation, which, without this clue, appears so astonishing.

The injunction of the Mosaic law was, that the Scriptures should be read in the synagogue every sabbath-day, and be studied by all classes at every possible opportunity. This injunction our blessed Saviour confirms by his command, to *search the Scriptures*, and in the primitive church they were constantly read. If heresies arose, it was not by shutting, but by opening of the Scriptures, they were repressed, and by an honest reference to the word of

sint; sed ex hoc probatas atque veras esse confidunt, quod eas veteres tradiderunt; tantaque est auctoritas vetustatis, ut inquirere in eam scelus esse ducatur. Itaque creditur ei passim tanquam cognitæ veritati.—*Lactantius de Origine Erroris, lib. 2. cap. 6.*

God. It is true, that those who are not permitted to see with their own eyes, may be guided more easily than those who are ; but it does not necessarily follow, that they will be guided safely. But the object of the primitive church was, that men should see and examine for themselves, and hence Lactantius thus reproaches the Heathens for not doing so.

* “ Every one, therefore, ought, in that especially upon which the principle of conduct depends, *to rely each upon himself*, to exert *his own judgment*, and *his own senses* ; to *investigate*, and *accurately sift out the truth*, and not, as if devoid of reason, to be deceived by a reliance on the errors of others. God has apportioned to all men, as an attribute of humanity, a faculty of discernment of truth, that they may discover that, of which they have not been informed ; and justly estimate that, of which they have been informed. Therefore as this discernment, that is, the means of the acquisition of truth, is innate, those men will divest themselves of it, who, without any exercise of their judgment, approve the inventions of their forefathers, and are led away, like a herd, by them.”

Such were the doctrines of the church of Rome,

* *Quare oportet, in ea re maximé, in quâ vitæ ratio versatur, sibi quemque confidere, suoque judicio ac propriis sensibus niti ad investigandam et perpendendam veritatem (potius) quam credentem alienis erroribus, decipi tanquam ipsum rationis expertem. Dedit omnibus Deus pro virili portione sapientiam, ut et inaudita investigare possint et audita expendere—Quare cum sapere, id est, veritatem quærere, omnibus sit innatum, sapientiam sibi adimunt, qui sine ullo judicio inventa majorum probant, et ab aliis, pecudum more ducunt.—Ibid. cap. 7. Lactantius de Origine Erroris, lib. 2.*

in the days of Arnobius and Lactantius; that is, in the reigns of Dioclésian and Constantine the Great. And according to these it must be meritorious to go out of a church, when it cannot be conscientiously adhered to.

If every one was to examine the grounds of his faith, the Scriptures must have been, as in truth they were, open to every one. It is evident that the venerable Lactantius was a stranger to the idea of any infallible judge, as such an idea is totally inconsistent with his rule of judgment. In this he, and the whole body of Christians of that day, followed the example of our Saviour and his Apostles. The evidences of Christianity were offered by them to the consideration of every one, and the penalty of resisting conviction referred to the decision of the only competent Judge of the human heart. The Apostles did not address the Gospels or epistles to any individual class, though some of the epistles are addressed to individuals. The rest were addressed to the Christians without distinction, with two very remarkable warnings.

1. That there should arise persons *in the church* who would corrupt the doctrines, and introduce errors common to the Heathens into it.

2. That they should beware of wresting the sense of Scripture.

The last is given by St. Peter himself, from which it is certain that this Apostle had no conception of any infallible interpreter of Scripture to be left upon earth, for, if he had, the warning would have

been not only superfluous, but wrong ; as, instead of such a warning, he should have told them they had an infallible interpreter and judge of Scripture to refer to.

From both the warnings, it is clear that the Apostles were so far from considering the authority of any church as infallible, or any church in particular as not liable to fall into the most grievous errors, that they are solicitous to set all Christians indifferently on their guard ; and that their writings were intended for this purpose, and therefore should be read throughout by, or to all, and that each should judge for himself.

Whence then did it arise that the church of Rome should assume the character of infallibility, and be able to deprive the laity of the perusal of the Scriptures ? This I will endeavour to determine.

The extent of the power of the Pontifex Maximus of Heathen Rome was such as would very naturally excite in an ambitious Roman Metropolitan the wish to acquire power of a similar kind over the Christians, and it was probably such a wish that induced *Pope Victor I.* to endeavour to force the Asiatic churches to conform to the Romish church, as to the day on which Easter was to be celebrated. But the full prosecution of such views could not take place until after that, by the favour of Constantine the Great, the church was tolerably secure from its enemies without. By his conversion, Christianity becoming the religion of the court, and, in a great measure, that of the state, the bishops of Rome soon appear to have begun to consider themselves as

entitled to a *display of luxury, and a control in government; and though the Pontifical books of the

* If St. Peter had ever thought of supremacy, the contest with St. Paul at Antioch gave him the most favourable opportunity possible to assert it; as the whole body of the Jewish Christians would probably have supported him. But St. Peter yielded to the decision of St. Paul, and upon a question of some consequence. To this the conduct of some of those, who are called his successors, formed a curious contrast soon after the time of Constantine, as will appear by the following extract from that plain and honest historian, Ammianus Marcellinus.

Damasus et Ursicinus supra humanum modum ad rapiendam episcopalem sedem ardentis, scissis studiis, asperimè conflictabantur, adusque mortis vulnerumque discrimina adiumentis utriusque progressis—et in concertatione superaverat Damasus, parte, quæ ei favebant, instante. Constatque in basilica Sinicini, ubi ritus Christiani est conventiculum, uno die centum triginta septem reperta cadavera peremptorum, efferatamque diu plebem ægre postea delinitam. Neque ego abnuo, ostentationem rerum considerans urbanarum, hujus rei cupidos, ob impetrandum quod appetunt omni contentione laterum jurgare debere: cum, id adepti, futuri sint ita securi, ut ditentur oblationibus matronarum, procedantque vehiculis insidentes, circumspectè vestiti, epulas curantes profusas adeo ut eorum convivia regales superent mensas. Qui esse possent reverà beati, si magnitudine urbis despectà, quam vitiis apponunt, ad imitationem Antistium quorundam provincialium viverent: quos tenuitas edendi, potandique parcissimè, utilitas etiam indumentorum, et supercilia humum spectantià, perpetuo numini, verisque ejus cultoribus ut puros commendant et verecundos.—*Lib. 27.*

Whilst Damasus and Ursicinus, eager beyond measure to seize upon the episcopal seat, were opposing each other, their partisans carried the contest so far as to wounds and death,—and Damasus prevailed by the strength of his party. It is a certain fact, that in one day the bodies of 137 persons, killed, were found in the Sinicianian palace, where the Christians have a conventicle, and

Heathen Pontiffs are lost to us, they seem, by what can still be collected, to have been well studied before they were lost.

The most obvious mode of shewing this will be to compare the expressions of Scripture, and of the Heathens, as to the Pontificate, in both systems. And here it is to be noted, that the only passages in Scripture, which speak of any character to which the title of Pontifex Maximus could belong, that is the character of High-Priest of the Christian system, applies it so * exclusively to our Saviour, as to make it appear dubious, at least, whether it was not somewhat more than presumption for any Christian to assume *this name*; however necessary it may be that the head of a society of any denomination should have a distinguishing title.

As it is, this very title seems, as by a fatality in its adoption, to lead the inquiry to the true origin of several of the peculiar institutions of the Romish

that the mob was long furious, and with difficulty appeased. Nor, when I consider the splendour of the situation in the city, do I deny, but that they who are desirous of it should exert every effort to obtain it; for, when they have once obtained it, they are sure of being enriched by oblations from matrons, to ride in carriages, to be elegantly dressed, and to keep a table of more than regal luxury. Yet truly happy would they be, if, with a contempt for that greatness of the city, which they number among its faults, they would, in their manner of life, imitate some of the provincial bishops, whose slender diet, abstinence from liquor, clothing merely necessary for use, and humble looks, recommend them to the favour of the eternal Deity, and to those who truly worship him as men of modest purity.

* See the whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

church ; of that combination of temporal with spiritual government ; and that attachment to mystery, superfluous ceremonials, and a multitude of supposed celestial intercessors and patrons, in religion.

Whoever will, with any care, consider the sacred code of Christianity, in itself, can scarcely avoid being struck with the marked exclusion of temporal power from the number of its immediate and proper objects, and of temporal views, in any immoderate degree, from being the objects of its professors. He will also find, that, however, several concomitant circumstances may be mysterious, and, as such, may be made subjects of contemplation, it announces itself, *not as mystery*, but as *revealing* what had *till then* been a mystery, viz. *the salvation of man through Jesus Christ* : that it enjoins two ceremonies only ; the one, baptism, which may be universally observed is enjoined without any thing in the terms which may abate of its universality. The other, the Lord's supper, is enjoined in terms, which, as is very remarkable, whilst they suggest the strongest motive for its constant observance, include the idea of occasions in which that observance might be impossible ; that is, where the elements might not be to be had. It will also appear that the Gospel acknowledges one celestial Intercessor in Heaven, and *one only*, that of the Christian High-Priest, Jesus Christ.

On the contrary, the very fundamental principles of Heathen religions were mysteries, ceremonies, and a polytheism, including the doctrine of a multitude of personal and local celestial intercessors and patrons.

In Rome, the priesthood was so immediately connected with the state, that * it was principally confined to the first families; the characters of statesman and priest generally met in the same person, and the first man of the state was frequently the Pontifex Maximus. The Emperors, to the time of Gratian, always were. Julius Cæsar made it an early object of his ambition, which of itself must prove its importance, and his example was followed by his successors. And hence, as the temporal ruler, in the times of Heathenism, was Pontifex Maximus, when the Popes assumed the latter title, it required no profound skill in dialectics to state the consequence as convertible, that as the rulers of the world had been Pontifices Maximi, so the Pontifices Maximi should be the rulers of the world.

To ambitious aims of this kind, the Scriptures of the New Testament are too directly opposed for such views; and had they, according to the use of the primitive church, continued to be read constantly in the church, and by all ranks of Christians, in their vulgar tongues, they would have been a permanent, and perhaps an insuperable, obstacle.

† “My kingdom,” said our Saviour, “is not of this world;” and when there was a strife among the

* Jam omnium sacra interierint quorum custodes vos (*sciz. Patricios*) esse debetis.—Itaque populus Romanus, brevi tempore, neque Regem sacrorum, neque Flamines, nec Salios habebit, nec ex parte dimidiâ reliquos sacerdotes.—*Cic. pro Domo sua.*

† John 18. ver. 36. St. Luke 22. ver. 24—26.

Apostles, *which should be accounted the greatest*, he said unto them, "The Kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority over them are called * Benefactors. *But it shall not be so with you.*" Accordingly, no priority, as to rank, appears from Scripture to have been assumed by any one over the other Apostles; and so far were they from taking any share in temporal concerns, that the order of † deacons was originally instituted in order that they might be exempt from any concerns of the kind.

If, however, Scripture authority for it was wanting, Heathen authority was full ‡. "There is no one," says Cicero, "of the various institutions which have, through the influence of the gods, been planned and established by our ancestors, that does them more honour than their having decreed that you, the self-same persons, Pontifices, should be at the head, both of religion and the state." It is then to the character of the Heathen Pontiffs that we must look for the original of the temporal power of the Christian Pontiffs; and, in the examination of other

* That is, have the title of *Euergetes*, or Benefactor, annexed to your name, as one of the Ptolemies, and several of the Kings of Syria, had. The inference therefore plainly is, that even the most benevolent motive was not to be an incitement to the followers of our Lord to seek a temporal dominion or superiority.

† Acts, chap. 6.

‡ Cum multa divinitus, Pontifices, a majoribus nostris inventa atque instituta sunt; tum nihil præclarius quam quod vos eodem, et religionibus Deorum immortalium, et summæ reipublicæ præesse voluerunt.—Cic. *pro Domo sua*.

features of the Pontifical character, the assimilation will probably assert the same origin.

As the only rational ground of adherence to any system of religion is a conviction of its truth, the Heathen priests, conscious that they could offer no rational evidence in favour of their several systems, substituted the authority of tradition; and whilst they represented each system as given by the gods to their ancestors, they declared themselves to be the only depositaries of all sacred knowledge, and the only interpreters of the Divine will. Their sacred books were in their keeping, and they alone were to consult and expound them.

How widely different this is from the precepts of the Scriptures, both under the Mosaic law and the Gospel, the following passages will show:—

“Thou shalt read the law before all Israel, in their hearing—that they may hear, and learn, and fear the Lord your God.—*Deut.* 31. *ver.* 11, 13.

“Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart, and in your soul—and ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way.—*Deut.* 11. *ver.* 18, 19.

“Should not a people seek unto their God—to the law and the testimony? If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.—*Isaiah* 8. *ver.* 19, 20.

“Search the Scriptures.—*John* 5. *ver.* 39.

“These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ.—*John* 20. *ver.* 31.

“These were more noble than those in Thessa-

lonica, in that they received the word with all gladness, *and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*—*Acts 17. ver. 11.*

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.—*Rom. 10. ver. 17.*

“I will endeavour that you may be able, after my death to have these things all in remembrance.—*2 Pet. 1. ver. 15.*

“Paul also hath written unto you, as also in all his epistles—in which there are some things hard to be understood, which they, who are unlearned, and unstable, wrest, as they also do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.—*2 Pet. 3. ver. 15, 16.*”

From the above passages it is indisputable, that both by the precepts and practice of the Jewish legislation, and of our Saviour and his Apostles, the Scriptures were to be open to all; and the last of them is by a kind of fatality as it were, which has been already noticed, in direct opposition to the belief of infallibility residing either in the church in general, or in any branch of it.

Let us then look to the Heathen priesthood of Rome, and Cicero as before will furnish us with the authority for the doctrines of infallibility, and keeping the sacred books from the laity, which in the Scriptures we cannot find. He thus expresses himself in the oration to the Pontiffs above cited.

* “What can be so arrogant as to attempt to inform

* *Quid enim est tam arrogans, quam de religione, de rebus divinis, cæimoniis, sacris, Pontificum collegium docere conari; aut tam stultum, quam, si quis in vestris libris invenerit, id narrare vobis, aut tam curiosum, quam ea scire velle, de*

the Pontifical college as to religion, or any thing ceremonial or ritual respecting it? What so foolish as to wish to inform you of what is to be found in your books? or so *impertinently inquisitive*, as to *wish to know* those things, which it has pleased our ancestors that *you alone* should be consulted upon, and have the knowledge of?"

* "I said from the first, that I would not speak of that which is your science; of sacred things; or of the secret law of the Pontiffs.—*These are kept to yourselves.*"

In fact, the whole oration shews he durst not.—Again, in his oration to the Haruspices, he says,—

† "The decision of three Pontiffs has ever been held as sufficiently sacred, august, and satisfactory as to religion, by the Roman people, the senate, and the immortal gods themselves."

‡ "The explanation of a religious difficulty may correctly be given even *by one* well-informed Pontiff."

To this representation of the power of the Pagan Pontiffs must be added that of the power of the Augurs, in order to complete that which has been

quibus majores nostri vos solos et consuli et scire voluerunt.—*Cic. Pro domo sua ad Pontifices.*

* Dixi a principio, nihil me, de scientiâ vestra, nihil de sacris, nihil de abscondito jure Pontificum, dicturum.—*Illa interiora.—Cic. ubi supra.*

† Quod tres Pontifices statuissent, id semper populo Romano, semper Senatui, semper ipsis Diis immortalibus satis sanctum, satis augustum, satis religiosum esse visum est.—*Cic. ad Haruspices.*

‡ Religionis explanatio vel ab uno Pontifice perito recte fieri potest.—*Ibid.*

assumed by the Papal Pontiffs. Cicero thus delineates it :

* “The greatest and most excellent right in the state is that of the Augurs, because it is combined with weighty influence ; for what greater right exists than that of the power of depriving the chief rulers, and magistrates of the assemblies of the people ; of dismissing councils when opened, or reversing their decrees ? What is more dignified than that the prohibition of a single Augur should put a stop to any business entered upon ? What more glorious than the power that, at their command, the Consuls shall abdicate their magistracy ? What more respectful as to religion, than that the courts of law are open or shut as they decree ? Nay, that their power even annuls a law if irregularly passed ?—That nothing valid can be done by the magistrates in private, or in public, without their approbation ?”

In the above extracts, we do then find a satisfactory origin of the doctrine of the infallibility of a peculiar body of priesthood. It is therefore worth while to

* *Maximum autem et præstantissimum in Rep. jus est Augurum, cum sit auctoritati conjunctum.—Quid enim majus est si de jure quærimus, quam posse a summis imperiis, et summis potestatibus Comitia tollere ? Concilia vel instituta dimittere, vel habita rescindere ? Quid gravius, quam rem susceptam dirimi, si unus Augur aliter dixerit ? Quid magnificentius quam posse decernere, ut magistratu se abdicent Consules ? Quid religiosius quam cum populo, cum plebe agendi jus aut dare, aut non dare ? Quid ? Legem, si non jure rogata est, tollet,—Nihil domi, nihil foris per magistratus gestum sine eorum auctoritate posse cuiquam probari.—Cic. *De Legibus*, lib. 2.*

pursue the subject as to the extent of the Pontifical power, and some particulars of the use made of it: and first as to the sacred books.

* “The power of the Pontiffs is supreme, for they determine on all things that appertain to religion.—In what cases soever they have no written laws, they enact new ones by their own determination. They are under the power of no one (though they may be compelled by the Plebeian Tribune to perform their respective sacred duties) neither are they accountable to either the Senate or the Commons. Their persons were also sacred. The Pontifex Maximus had the care of the rites of Vesta, and † the vestal virgins, and was therefore styled *ἐπισκοπος*, or *Bishop*. He superintended and regulated public worship, and punished offenders by fine, &c. and sometimes with death. He could dispense with religious ceremonies, and judged of oracular books and answers, and of the circumstances under which such books might be consulted.”

Were there not a few words in the above extracts, which indicate that they are descriptive of the Heathen Pontiff and the Augurs, the reader might readily suppose them to be so of the Christian Pontiff.

This power was moreover exerted to the prohibition of the use of the sacred books, and to the de-

* See the French *Encyclopedie*, under the word *Pontife*.

† Nunneries were not established till the vestal virgins were no more, though monasteries were so long before. Nunneries may therefore justly be considered as a continuation of the same institution, under another name.

struction of such as were thought proper to be destroyed by the Pontifex Maximus. For Augustus when he had attained to this station, * “having collected the prophetic books, Greek and Latin, burned upwards of two thousand of those, which were of no authority, or of *improper* authority, and retained the Sybilline books only; and even of those only a selection.”

He also made a law † “that any prophetic book should within a certain number of days be brought to the Prætor, and that (as had by their ancestors been decreed) no one should have such in private possession, because that many of no authenticity were published under a celebrated name.”

Tiberius went further. He would not, in a time of public calamity, and when ‡ Asinius Gallus proposed that the Sybilline books themselves should be consulted, permit it to be done. “Thus,” says Tacitus, “he kept all, divine and human, in obscurity.”

From the same source, the interference of the

* Quicquid fatidicorum librorum, Græci Latiniq̃ generis, nullis vel *parum idoneis* auctoribus vulgo ferebatur, supra duo millia contracta undiq̃ cremavit, ac solos retinuit Sybillinos: hos quoque delectu habito.—*Suet. in Vit. Aug. cap. 31.*

† Simul commonefecit; quia multa vacea sub nomine celebri vulgabantur, quem intra diem ad Prætorem urbanum deferrentur, neque habere privatim liceret: quod a majoribus quoque decretum erat.—*Taciti Annal. lib. 6. cap. 12.*

‡ Censuit Asinius Gallus ut libri Sibyllini adirentur: renuit Tiberius, perinde divina humanaque obtegens.—*Ib. lib. 1. cap. 76.*

church, in Testamentary matters, appears to have derived its origin. At least it has none in Scripture. In cases of adoption, and probably for similar reasons in matrimonial contracts, the Pontifices inquired into the circumstances of family descent, dignity, and sacred rites; and therefore Cicero adduces the circumstance, that, “the * payment of *the money appropriated to sacred rites attached to the inheritance of the name*,” as a proof that the adoption was legal, according to the Pontifical law; for the Pontifices † had, as far as regarded these rights, the cognizance of inheritances. With great prudence, however, another Roman law was not officiously brought forward, viz. ‡ “Let no one dedicate ground to religious uses, and let bounds be placed to the dedicating of gold, silver, and ivory, for such purpose.”

Hence then it will be evident, that, in the great and sudden change introduced by Constantine, the Heathen customs and prejudices were transferred to the Christian system. Hence, and hence only, can we account for that species of policy in the Romish church, which has made of a Bishop a temporal Prince; which attributes infallibility to the decisions of its councils; which establishes a supremacy of the Pontificate; a power to dispense with religious obligation, and to grant or withhold the

* *Hæreditates nominis pecuniæ sacrorum secutæ sunt.*—*Cic. pro domo sua ad Pont.*

† *Vide Cic. de Legibus lib. 2.*

‡ *Nequis agrum consecrato. Auri, Argenti, Eboris sacrandi modus est.*—*Lex xii. Tab.*

perusal of the sacred books, and a prohibition of the use of them to the laity.

Hence only can we also account for the otherwise strange facility with which the laity submitted to such pretensions of a Christian Bishop. The ideas of the multitude, who were the converts more of the times and court favour than of conviction, had been formed by habit to a blind submission to the sacerdotal decision, and a fear of inquiry into the dictates of its authority. Such ideas were therefore flattered by a continuation of their former habits and old prejudices, and probably by that of the assumption of the sacerdotal titles, the dress, and even the *Lituus* of the Augurs, under the new name of the *pastoral staff*; by the display of magnificence of the former priesthood; and by the grandeur and ornaments of the temples, which immediately took place, if the authorities from which Platina took his accounts of them are to be credited in any degree.

Which of the Popes it was, who first assumed the title of *Pontifex Maximus*, I have not the means of determining; though I strongly suspect it to have been * Boniface III. as it is certain he was the first who took the unchristian title of Universal Bishop. Be this as it may, these circumstances of the times were equally fatal to the purity of the doctrines of the Romish church, and fatally subservient to the ambitious usurpations of a long list of Popes, to whom this disposition of the people was a most

* If it were he, it would be another mark of Mr. Faber's correctness in his very able calculation of the prophetic periods.

commodious circumstance; neither was it suffered to lie unimproved. To save appearances, something like an authority from Scripture was indeed necessary; and the happy dexterity of eliciting one from the words *Thou art Peter* sufficiently shews the miserable shifts, and pitiable argument, they were driven to for the purpose. It was enough, however, for those, who were already content to be without a knowledge of the Scriptures.

But where the ancient prejudices militated openly against the restrictions of their Christian teachers, these converts were by no means so tractable. They were content to be ignorant; but they were not content to lose the festivities of the Heathen ritual, and the sensible representations of the objects of worship. The sacrifice * *once* offered was not one that could favour these. What then was to be done? Pope Gregory I. in his letter to Mellitus, informs us. † “For that they are wonte to kill oxen in sacrifice to the divells, they shal use the same slaughter now, but chaunged to a better purpose.” This good Pope, for he was really a good man, had not, however, as it should seem, any notion of *the*

* Heb. ix. v. 28.—That this sacrifice was offered *once for all*, and *not* to be repeated, is clear from the context of this whole chapter, wherein it is put in opposition to the repeated and daily sacrifices of the Jews; and indeed from the remainder of this verse, “He shall appear the *second time* without sin unto salvation.” He is not then to appear a second time till then; and consequently is not offered, nor does appear in the Mass.

† Bede's Ecclesiastical History, book 1. chap. 30. Stapleton's Translation.

sacrifice of the Mass; for if he had, how natural would it have been for him to have exhorted Mellitus to inform the Heathens that there was a *better sacrifice* which ought to take place of the other. Happy would it have been had this been all; for by proceeding in a similar manner, before and after him, by yielding to the prejudices of the Heathens, it came to pass that image-worship, and the horrible omission of the second commandment, according to our division (or latter part of the first, according to another division of the ten commandments), in order to favour image-worship, and the greatest part of the Heathen ceremonial, were sanctioned, after the year of our Lord 300, by the Christian church.

When the Mass came to be termed a sacrifice, the Romans would, according to the Heathen idea, term him who brought the sacrifice to the altar, *Popa*; and the Popes, not well pleased with the name, though not able to sink it entirely, prefer that of *Papa*. The former was probably used by the Gentiles, and the latter by the Christians, in opposition to them.

As to transubstantiation, Tertullian and Arnobius prove, decidedly, that it was not the doctrine of the African or Latin church in their time.

Let us hear Tertullian. * "Christ," says he, "when he took the bread and distributed it to his disciples,

* "Acceptum panem et distributum discipulis corpus suum fecit," (Christus) "Hoc est corpus meum dicendo, id est, figura corporis mei."—*Tert. adv. Marcionem, lib. 4.*

made it his body, by saying *This is my body*, that is, *the REPRESENTATION of my body.*"

Let us also hear Arnobius. * "Do the gods dwell

* In simulachris Dii habitant: singuline in singulis? Toti an partiliter, atque in membra divisi? Nam neque unus Deus in compluribus potest, uno tempore, inesse simulachris, neque rursus in partes, sectione interveniente, divisus.—*Arnobius adversus Gentes, lib. 5.*

Were this a controversial work on the subject, it would not be difficult to adduce many authorities. But as those referred to concern only the Latin Fathers, it may not be improper to add one or two from the Greek Fathers, to shew that they also held the same doctrine in the primitive ages.

Justin Martyr, who cannot be accused of an aversion to a literal interpretation, speaks thus of the elements of the sacrament after they had been consecrated, Διδουσις ικασω των παροντων μιζαλαξις απο του ευχαριστησιος αβλου, και οινου, και υδατος. *They give to each present of the BREAD, and WINE, and WATER, that HAS BEEN CONSECRATED; and that he considers them as unchanged in their substance is evident from the observation that follows. Ου γαρ ως κοινον αβλον, ουδε κοινον πομα λαμβανομεν. We do not receive them as COMMON BREAD or a COMMON DRINK.*

Here they are still *bread*, and *wine*, and *water*. He then adds, "but when it has been blessed, we have been taught that this food, εξ ης αιμα και σαρκεις δια μεταβολην τρεφοιται ημων, *by THE DIGESTION WHEREOF our blood and flesh are nourished*, are the body and blood of Jesus, who was made flesh."—*Apol. 2d.*

In this there is no more than what the Protestant acknowledges; the elements of bread and wine in themselves are spoken of as unchanged; and accordingly, Clement of Alexandria, speaking of the sacrament, says more expressly, Το δε αιμα οινος αλληγορειται, (*Pædag. lib. 1.*) *The word wine is ALLEGORICALLY used for blood.*

I will add but one instance more, as it will prove that this was the doctrine of the Greek church to the middle of the fifth century. Ουδε μιζα τον αγιασμον τα μυστικα συμβολα της οικειας εξιγαλει φουσως, μινι γαρ επι της προιερας ουσιας, και του σχηματος, και της ουσιας. *Neither do the mystic symbols lose their proper nature,*

in images, one in each ; or by piecemeal, and divided into portions? For ONE, though *even a god, cannot be at one time in several images or representations, neither partially, by division.*" But the council of Trent declares an anathema, in direct opposition to the doctrine of both these Fathers.

* " If any one affirms that the body and blood, together with the human soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore *Christ entire*, is not truly, really, and substantially contained in the sacrament of the most holy eucharist, but that he is in it only in sign, figure, or virtually so ; let him be anathema."

To avoid mistakes upon the subject, it is necessary to subjoin the third Canon of the same session also.

† " If any one shall deny that, in the venerable sacrament of the eucharist, *Christ entire* is contained under *each* species, and *under the several parts of each species after they have been divided*, let him be anathema."

Here then the church of Rome of the sixteenth is

for they remain in their former substance, and form of the substance.—Theodoret, Dial. 2d.

* Si quis negaverit, in sanctissimæ eucharistiæ sacramento, contineri vere, realiter, et substantialiter, corpus et sanguinem, unâ cum animâ et divinitate Domini nostri Jesu Christi, ac proinde totum Christum ; sed dixerit tantummodo esse in eo in signo vel figurâ aut virtute, anathema sit.—*Sessio 13. Can. 1.*

† Si quis negaverit, in venerabili sacramento eucharistiæ, sub unâquaque specie et sub singulis cujusque speciei partibus, *separatione factâ* TOTUM CHRISTUM contineri : anathema sit.—*Sessio 13. Can. 3.*

fairly at issue with the church of Rome of the third century, and the council of Trent with Tertullian and Arnobius. Nor are they less so with the Scriptures, which declare the institution to be *in remembrance*; from whence it necessarily follows, that our blessed Saviour is NOT *personally present* in his bodily form.

For the present purpose it is sufficient to show that the church of Rome now holds doctrines that are absolutely inconsistent with those which the church of Rome held in the third century; that the same appellation has been made, to signify churches of a widely different description; and that the Latin Fathers themselves justify the departure from error, of whatever standing it be, or from whomsoever it may have been received.

The idea of transubstantiation clearly originated in Heathenism. It runs through its mythology from Deucalion to Julius Cæsar; and, to say the truth, the strongest authority for it is in Ovid's * *Books of Transubstantiations*. Nor could it be otherwise supposed to have been derived from Scripture, than in consequence of the application of *Heathen ideas* to an Hebrew *idiomatic expression*, by those, who were not only ignorant of the Hebrew language, but careless of an idiom sufficiently evident, even in translations, as such, and determined to wrest a sense conformable to their prejudices. The doctrine, at first conceived obscurely, then debated openly, was at length confirmed decidedly as that of the Romish church by Innocent III. the Pope who declared Magna Charta null and void.

* Better known by the name of *Metamorphoses*.

The Protestants, with the Latin Fathers Arnobius, Lactantius, and others, and with the primitive Greek church, upon the authority of Scripture, deny that the consecrated elements of the eucharist are the real body and blood of Christ; and therefore, according to their denial of it, the worship of the elements *is*, to all intents and purposes, a worship *truly idolatrous**. The error of those who believe the elements to be transubstantiated, does not make the error less. This was precisely the error of the Israelites in the worshipping of the golden calf. Though they made use of a form which they had seen worshipped in Egypt, they did not worship the image as that of an Egyptian god, but as denoting the presence of *the God that brought them out of Egypt*, and as *believing it to be so*. Whether such a mode of denoting it be under the appearance of a calf, or of a piece of bread, does not in the least alter the nature of the error itself; and therefore to worship any *visible* representation, which is not God, as God, or to reverence, or bow down, to any representation, the work of men's hands, is the very essence of idolatry, or there never existed an idolatrous worship among the Heathens; for, even amongst them, none, except

* The second commandment, (or, as they divide the decalogue, the latter part of the first, *which is not generally known to Roman Catholics*,) decisively condemns the reverence paid to images or pictures; it may not therefore be amiss to subjoin its accurate interpretation here, which is, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, or any likeness of any thing which is in the heavens above or the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not bow thyself to them, nor do them reverence.—*Exodus chap. xx. v. 4, 5.*

such perhaps as were but a few degrees removed from idiotism, believed the statue to be the god whose name it bore. When Protestants, therefore, speak of the *idolatry* of the Mass, *they speak correctly*.

As to invocation of Saints, and the worship or veneration of images, neither of them was known in the primitive church, for it had *neither temples, altars, nor images*. And the argument of Arnobius against the Heathen veneration of images is directly in point against that paid to them by the church of Rome, with the single substitution of the word *Saints* for *Gods*. * “Ye say we venerate the { Saints
Gods by means of the images; what can be a greater insult, contumely, or inconsistency, than, knowing it not to be the { Saint,
God, to supplicate what is not so, or to hope for the aid of the { Saint,
God, whilst you pray *before an insensible representation?*

Abstractedly considered †, it is doing little honour to a Saint to imagine him capable of being affected by the childish vanity arising from any respect paid to his image, &c. It is true that the council of Trent has been singularly guarded in its expressions on the subject; and the well-informed among the Roman Catholics do not probably go further than to consider images, &c. of Saints, as memorials of those whom

* Deos (inquit) per simulachra veneramur.—Et quid fieri potest injuriosius, contumeliosius, aut durius, quam Deum alterum scire, et rei alteri supplicare? Opem sperare de numine, et nullius sensus ad effigiem deprecari?—*Adv. Gentes, lib. 5.*

† See, upon this subject, more in the Appendix.

they honour. Yet, when that council permits, and even approves the *kissing the images, uncovering the head before them, and bowing down before them*, though it enjoins that the honour be referred to the original, we cannot but recollect, that this mode of veneration is the very same that *the Heathens* paid to *their images*. The argument of Arnobius therefore applies full as much to the Roman Catholics as it did to the Heathens, as to images in general; but much more so as to the veneration of the cross, which, in some of their prayers, is so addressed, as, at least, to make it very difficult to distinguish it, if intended metaphorically, or referentially, as being such. Is it then to be conceived that the ignorant will make such distinctions? surely not. We have also the testimony of Minucius Felix that no veneration was paid to the cross in the primitive church, and that this very veneration was originally a Pagan one, and thus only can we rationally account for its adoption afterwards. This Christian apologist, addressing the Heathens, says, * “ We *neither honour crosses, nor wish for them. You, who openly consecrate wooden gods, perhaps adore wooden crosses, as limbs of your gods. For what are your several standards, but crosses gilt and ornamented?*

* Cruces nec colimus, nec optamus. Vos plane qui ligneos deos consecratis, cruces ligneos, ut deorum vestrorum partes, forsitan adoratis. Nam et signa ipsa et cantabra et vexilla castrorum quid aliud quam inauratæ cruces sunt, et ornatæ? Trophæa vestra victricia non tantum simplicis crucis faciem, verum et affixi hominis imitantur.—*Min. Fel. Octavius.*

Your trophies are not simple crosses, but have some kind of a *resemblance of a man* affixed to them." Hence then it seems most probable, that the veneration of crosses was introduced as another compliment to Heathen prejudices; but with the change of the reference. To this prejudice there was another attached, that of the healing powers of crosses; from whence, and similar ones in other respects, the miraculous powers attributed to crosses and reliques were likewise most probably derived. According to Pliny, * "A piece of a *nail* from a cross, wrapped in woollen and applied to the throat, was a *magical* remedy for a *quartan ague*." It must not however be omitted, that this might possibly, in Pliny's time, be one of the prescriptions of the poor Jews, who, driven to extremities, made some pretensions to magic, and might be tempted thus to endeavour to turn to their advantage the celebrity of the miracles done in the name of him who was crucified. What makes this the more probable is, that Juvenal introduces † a poor Jewess as chief priestess of *the tree*, and interpreter of the will of Heaven, in a passage which, thus understood, with reference to the cross, obviates every difficulty.

Whether this conjecture be well-founded or not, the honouring of the cross was not known in the Latin

* In quartanis fragmentum clavi a cruce involutum lanâ collo subnectunt.—*Plinii Hist. Nat. lib. 28. cap. 4.*

† Arcanum Judæa tremens mendicat in aurem,
Interpres legum Solymarum, et magna sacerdos
Arboris, ac summi fide internuncia cœli.—*Juv. Sat. 6.*

church in the time of Minucius Felix. It is a doctrine of the times when Heathen principles broke into it like a torrent, and Heathen customs and prejudices polluted its simplicity and purity.

It is not necessary, nor would it be just, to consider all this as intentional error, or error against knowledge. In many cases it was, no doubt, the error of prejudice and ignorance; but the sudden and extravagant change which took place on Constantine's embracing Christianity, and the violent ones that followed it, from simplicity to luxury, and from religion to superstition, cannot be remembered without regret, or considered without blame.

Even the temper of the old Roman state was transferred to the church; and, if the cry of *the Christians to the lions* ceased, that of *the heretics to the stake* succeeded it. The * excommunication of the primitive church, in the apostolic age, was what every society requires, and no more; that is, the

* See the Speech of the late Bishop of St. Asaph, Dr. Horsley, on the Catholic Question, whose name I cannot suffer to pass under my pen without paying a tribute (small indeed, but truly sincere) to his memory. He was truly a great and good man. His mind had taken an ample range of science. As a classic scholar, a mathematician, and a divine, his knowledge was extensive and profound; his memory retentive, his penetration quick, and his decision prompt, and expressed readily in strong and nervous language. His disposition was cheerful; and, like that of most, perhaps all men of first-rate abilities, highly liberal. What the church of England owes to him she will long remember with gratitude; and those who knew him personally will think of him with a sigh that they see him no more, though their trust will be that he is now enjoying a blessed reward of his labours.

mere exclusion from the church or society, and its spiritual benefits. When a Christian was excluded from the church, he was of course thrown into the world; and to be considered as the rest of the world was, in apostolic language, said to be; that is, under the power of Satan. *To expel from the church, and to deliver to Satan*, were therefore synonymous expressions. The Christians were not to associate with the excommunicated person, or to readmit him into the church without repentance; but here the human effect of the censure terminated. The calling in of the civil power to punish a *spiritual* offence purely such, has no foundation in the New Testament. It is only when the spiritual offence becomes a civil one also, that the civil power has a Christian authority to take notice of it; and then not of the spiritual, but of the civil quality of the offence, and that, exercising judgment in mercy.

It may be said of the Roman laws, as of those of Draco, that they were written in blood; and, wherever the civil code has been adopted, a sanguinary ferocity has been the leading feature of its legalized inflictions. It is to be lamented that the church of Rome should ever have favoured them; but still it is a truth that she has not only done so, but that, wherever that church has had the power of persecution, it has been so much in their full spirit as sometimes to have brought reprisals on themselves, in the heat of the recollection of sufferings, which, in the cooler moments of reflection, even they who reported could not, it is to be hoped, approve.

Whether it were a merit or not to go out of the

church of Rome, such as it was at the time of the Reformation, or whether it be any merit in, or plea in favour of, those who did not go out of it, let the reader judge.

It is also said that "the Roman Catholics profess the religion which they have received from their ancestors, British, or Saxon, or Norman." To this it may be justly answered, that were the Roman-Catholic religion now *the same*, in every essential point, with that professed by those ancestors, still the only question would remain which is of any real importance; and that is, Were those ancestors *right*, or were they *wrong*, in the religion they professed? Did they, or did they not, admit doctrines inconsistent with the Scriptures? The foundation of all Christianity is the revealed will of God, the Scriptures being received as such; though tradition may also be received, as far *as it is* NOT INCONSISTENT *with them*; yet beyond this no human authority can go, nor any considered as divine, unless under the equally absurd and impious supposition, *that the Deity* * *contradicts himself*. Of an influence, not visibly testified, of the Holy Spirit, we can judge only by a comparison of that which is done by those who *suppose* or *assert* the presiding of that influence over their actions or determinations, with what we know to have been dictated by that Holy

* Though one revelation may supersede another, as to ceremonial institutes, or reveal additional circumstances; were a new revelation to subvert a prior one, as to moral precepts, or articles of faith, it would destroy faith itself.

Spirit. It is the rule given by our Saviour. *By their fruits ye shall know them.* If the Deity then has not given the rational faculties of the mind *to lie dormant*, as to its best interests; or, what is worse, made them and the senses apparently capable of discrimination, and *imposes* upon them; belief, in such case, would be idle, and conviction equally deficient of certainty, as to truth or falsehood. It is true, that in certain cases the assistance of the Holy Spirit is promised; but whether the occasion *fulfils the terms of the promise*, and, therefore, whether it *is* given on any particular occasion, must be proved by *the fact*, that the result *is such, when compared with Scripture*, as can *reasonably be ascribed to that influence*. Otherwise, there may be no bounds to imposture. It is true that council after council has asserted itself to act under such influence; and would to God they had not given, in most cases after the first council of Nice, too much reason to believe there was an influence presiding of a very different kind. At least Gregory Nazianzen seems to have thought so of those in his time; for he thus complains of them: * “To say the truth, I am disposed to avoid every assembling of the Bishops, for I have never seen any good end of a council, or that it remedied the evils; but rather added to them.”

Had it been, as it ought to have been, observed, that, in the council of the Apostles at Jerusalem, the

* Εχω μιν ουτως, ὡς δει Ἰαληθῆς εἶπαι, ὡς παῖα συλλογον φινγειν ἐπισκοπων· οἱ μηδὲμιας συνοδου ἱλος εἶδον χρηστον, μηδὲ λυσιον κακων μαλλον ἐσχηκυιας, ἢ προσεθῆκων.—Greg. Naz. Ep. ad Procopium.

testimony of the Holy Ghost referred to was *the conversion of Cornelius*, by which it appeared that what they were about to decree did truly seem good to the Holy Ghost, (and *no other reason* for its seeming so *is given*,) it would have saved the church from many a grievous error. Where some equally valid testimony was not given, it is much to be feared that the councils, who asserted their being under his influence, may have been in danger of approaching rather too near to a sin declared to be unpardonable, in this world, or the next.

That the Romish church has, from the primitive age down to the council of Trent, varied in the explanations, additions, and restrictions, as to faith and discipline, is incontestable. Our complaint respects these no further than as they are inconsistent with the written word of God. It is also certain that, in several of these respects, the doctrine of the church of Rome at present is not the same with that of *the English part of it*, soon after the conversion of the Saxons. The homily of Ælfrick, Bishop of Shireburne, written about A. D. 1000, and which was appointed publickly to be read in churches, says—
 * “ There is *a wide difference* between the body in which Christ suffered, and this body, which, in the mystery of the passion of Christ, is daily received

* Multa differentiâ separantur corpus in quo passus est Christus, et hoc corpus quod in mysterio passionis Christi quotidie a fidelibus celebratur.—Hoc corpus pignus est et species, illud ipsa veritas.—See Archbishop Usher's Answer to a Challenge made by a Jesuit, p. 81, 82.

by the faithful. This body is a pledge and figure; that the reality itself."

The principal point then of the modern Romish church, that is, transubstantiation, is in direct opposition to the doctrine of the *Anglo-Saxon church*; and Archbishop Usher has proved the same of others of the principal points in which we differ.

For further information on the doctrinal part of the subject, I will beg leave to refer to the Archbishop's treatise itself; but, on the political part of it, there is an instance which bears so immediately on this part of the question of the present day, that it ought not to be passed over. This is the firm opposition of Alfred, the son of Egbert, and King of the Northumbrians, to the Papal supremacy. The occasion was this:—

Wilfrid, Archbishop of York, who was one of the most zealous adherents of his time to Rome, having exerted himself strenuously to introduce the Romish mode of observing Easter, and the Romish tonsure, which was round, whereas that of the British and Scottish churches was the shaving or perhaps polling the hinder part of the head; a council, at which the King, and Berthwald, Archbishop of Canterbury, presided, was held on the subject, and Wilfrid, being required to abdicate the See, appealed to the apostolic See; whereupon the King and Archbishop replied, that by so preferring its judgment to theirs he had made himself guilty, and should be condemned. Wilfrid was however permitted to depart, and went to Rome, where he laid his case before the Pope, and from him obtained a letter to Alfred and

Ethelred, King of the Mercians, enjoining them to assemble another council on the subject, and, if it should not be determined there, to refer it to Rome. Wilfrid, on his return, was well received by Ethelred, and by his advice sent two friends to request permission to bring the letter, and the decision of the Papal See, to Alfred. To their representations Alfred gave a reply that does honour to his memory.

“ My venerable friends,” said he, “ ask what is necessary for yourselves, and the respect I bear you will induce me to grant it. But, from this day forward, ask me nothing in favour of your master, Wilfrid. Never whilst I live will I alter what the Kings my predecessors, and an Archbishop with their council, and what I myself, with an Archbishop sent by the apostolic See, together with *almost all the Prelates of Britain of your nation, (the Mercians,)* have decreed.

The writer of the life adds, (as it might be expected,) that he was informed by credible witnesses, that Alfred, when he was dying, wished a reconciliation with Wilfrid; what is of more consequence is, that till that time he did not. Ethelred, in his latter days, very properly had his head shaved, and died a monk.

It will not be easy to conceive, therefore, how the Roman Catholics of the present day can be said, in any proper sense, to have received their religion from their Saxon ancestors. As to their British ancestors, there must surely have been a great want of recollection when the word *British* was inserted. Is it then necessary to recall to mind the absolute refusal of

the * British Bishops, to unite with the Monk Austin? Is it necessary to state, that the British and Scotch churches derived the authority of their customs from † *Saint John*, and not from *Saint Peter*; that they differed from the church of Rome in the *celebration of Easter*, in a manner that proves decidedly, that the origin of those churches must have been nearly, if not precisely, in the Apostolic times? The body of those composing the ancient British church, properly such, was perhaps at no time *entirely* under the See of Rome. The intrusion of the Norman Bishop Barnard did indeed bring St. David's, in the time of Henry I. under it; and the crafty manœuvre of Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, in going through Wales, under the colour of raising recruits for the Crusade, and by saying Mass in the churches, laying a foundation for subjecting them to the See of Canterbury.

The means adopted were worthy of the design. Rhys ap Gryffydd, Prince of South Wales, was, in opposition to the prayer and protest of the clergy of St. David's, persuaded and perhaps intimidated so far as to allow Baldwin to go through his territories. It is, however, very remarkable, that, though Giraldus tells a long story of Henry II. at St. David's, he dispatches the account of Baldwin's acts there in few and very suspicious words. "The Archbishop having said Mass at the high altar in the church of

* See also Blackstone's Commentaries, book 4. chap. 8.

† See Bede, Hist. Eccl. lib. 3. cap. 25.

St. David *at the first glimpse of day* HASTENED towards Aberteifi."

Hence it is evident that if he said Mass there at all, which seems dubious, he did it like a robber of the privileges of the church, *surreptitiously*, and had reason to apprehend a signal and just vengeance. As to his levies for the crusade, even Giraldus confesses they were the refuse of the people, chiefly malefactors; and, supported by those, he was able to use force to intrude at Bangor: for the same author says, that Guian, the Bishop, was compelled, by an importunity *beyond persuasion*, (in plain English, *absolute force*,) whilst the people of both sexes lamented it with tears and cries, in the most piteous manner, to take the cross, and thus to be exiled from his bishopric, that an intruder might be placed there.

There was, however, one Prince, Owen Cyfeiliog, who was not to be imposed upon by the novelty of the sight, or the speciousness of the sanctified usurper. He *did not suffer him to come within his territories*; and of course was anathematized, because he did not surrender the rights of the ancient British church. How this inroad of Baldwin was followed up, and how far, or how long, precisely, the Sees of Wales were brought to be dependent on the Pope, it may not be easy to ascertain; but it is easy to see, that, whilst any memory of these things remained, there could be no cordial connexion. The church of Rome, did not however, rest here. That which was an usurpation begun by fraud, was to be accomplished by force; the English, as it appears from the remonstrance of the Welshmen to Edward I., did *cruellie*

exercise, tyrannie towards the church and churchmen. This denotes no agreement. Llewelyn styles Peckham Archbishop of Canterbury, and Primate of all *England*, but not a word of *Wales*. He also observes that *England* is under the special protection of the See of Rome; but he solicits its interest for Wales by no such claim, and Peckham's answers have nothing of the address to a *beloved son* in them. They are merely to be intimated. In fact, the wish to subdue the church of Wales to Rome seems to have been the prime mover of the wish to subdue the country. Owen Glendower, in retaliation, destroyed the Cathedrals of Bangor and St. Asaph; the Reformation, therefore, was welcomed throughout Wales, as breaking off that connexion, and the reading of the Scriptures completed it.

That the ancient church of Ireland was not in union with Rome, and that it was *force* that, in the time of Henry II., brought it about, will be evident from some very curious and remarkable passages in Bede and in Giraldus Cambrensis, who was himself a staunch Romanist, and one of the most zealous of his time in promoting the power and influence of Rome, except in the case of making St. David's subject to Canterbury.

In the 4th chapter of the 2d book of his Ecclesiastical History, Bede gives this account of the antipathy of the Irish to the Romish church in the time of Laurence, the immediate successor of the Monk Austin in England. Speaking of Laurence, he says :

“ And truly he hofully (*anxiously*) cared, not only for the new church, wich was now gathered of

Englishmen, but also for the church of the old inhabitantes of Britannie, and of the Scottes too, who harboured in Ireland—For as sone as he knew the life and profession of the Scottes in their forenamed country to be *skarce ecclesiastical*, and well ordered *in manie pointes*, (lyke as was the Britons at that tyme in Britannie,) specially bycause they celebrated not the solemnitie of Ester (Easter) in dew tyme—he—with the other Byshops—wrote unto them an exhorting epistle—The beginning of this epistle was suche.”

“ To our derest beloved brethren the Bysshops and Abbottes throwgh out all Scotland, Laurence, Mellite, and Justus, Bysshops, and servants to them that fear God, greeting. When as the See Apostolique (according to the customable maner thereof, to send into all places of the worlde) directed and sent us unto these west quarters to preache the word of God to paynim people and to Hethen men, it happed us to entre into this yle, which is called Britannie. Where thinking that all that dyd beare the name of Christen men walked according to the way of the universal church, we honored with greate reverence as wel the Britons, as the Scottes. But after we had wel proved and tryed the Britons *to swarve from the same*, we yet judged the Scottes for better men. Marye now we have lerned by Bysshop Dagamus coming to this before-mentioned yland, and we doe understand by the Abbot Columban of Fraunce, that the Scottes (*that is the Irish*) *doe nothing differ from the Britons* in their conversation. For Bysshop Dagamus coming to us, *wold not only not eate with us*, but not so much as eate his meate in that house where we were.”

The principal reasons assigned by the Romish

writers in general for this aversion are the difference as to the time of keeping Easter, and that as to shaving the crown. But in the Life of Wilfrid another cause also is stated, viz. that they of the Romish church made such an use of *the sign of the cross* as appeared to the Britons to be *idolatrours*. * “If any of our Abbots or Presbyters” says the writer of Wilfrid’s Life, “when invited by any of the believers amongst the common people, *blessed the food set before him with the SIGN of the cross*, they thought that the meat ought to be carried out and thrown away, as an *idolatrours* sacrifice.” From this circumstance it seems probable that the introduction of the use of *images* was also a cause of the dissension. The worshipping of saints and martyrs, was also another cause, as will presently appear.

Hence then it appears, that a Bishop of the Irish church would not even eat in the same house as a Romish Bishop at this time, and that on account of the difference of their churches in very essential respects. It also appears that the ancient British and Irish churches were the same, and that both disagreed with the church of Rome, and refused to have any connexion with it. This was indeed a provoking defalcation from its pretended universality, and the warmth apparent in the above epistle shews it was felt so. Here, however, we have the authority of a writer of the church of Rome, and of acknowledged

* Si quispiam abbatum vel Presbyterum nostrorum, a fideli de plebe rogatus, refectionem suam ante se positam *signo crucis Dei benediceret*, foris projiciendum et effundendum, *quasi idolothyum* judicabant.—*Vita Wilfredi*. Ed. Gale, p. 77.

credit, establishing the fact. It being undoubtedly so then in the seventh century, let us now see how the case stood even so late as the twelfth, upon the testimony of Giraldus, another writer of that church.

It appears then from him, that the Irish Bishops, when Henry II. went over to Ireland, * were *elected* out of the monasteries; and † that the Irish church differed from the Romish church as to *tithes*, *matrimonial regulations*, and *the devout veneration and frequenting of churches*; and therefore Henry determined to make the Irish church *conform to that of England*. In this change the Romish clergy were at an unhappy loss for some of the favourite implements for playing tricks of the sacred legerdmain of those days. Ireland, alas! had *had no martyrs*. Giraldus, who was warm in the cause, and supposes, and indeed endeavours to make it appear, that their having had no martyrs was because the Bishops had no zeal, accordingly reproached Maurice, the Archbishop of Cashel, with it. The Archbishop's reply was a home one. ‡ "It is true we have none, for our nation, barbarous, uncivilized, and cruel, as it may

* Gir, Cam. Top. Hib. lib. 3. cap. 29.

† Ib, Hib. Exp. lib. 1. cap. 33.

‡ Verum est, inquit, quia licet gens nostra *barbara nimis*, inculta et crudelis esse videatur: viris tamen ecclesiasticis honorem magnum et reverentiam semper exhibere solebant et in sanctos Dei nulla occasione manum extendere. Sed nunc in regnum gens advenit que martyres et facere novit, et consuevit. A modo Hibernia sicut et aliæ regiones, martyres habebit.—*Top. Hib. lib. 2. cap. 32.*

seem to be, has always paid great respect and reverence to its ecclesiastics, and would on no account raise a hand against them. But now a nation is come into this kingdom, which knows how, and has been accustomed, to make martyrs. Henceforward Ireland will have its martyrs, like other countries." Had the church of Ireland been in union with that of Rome, this Archbishop could have had no grounds for the apprehension.

If, however, there can remain a doubt upon the subject, the following circumstance may decide the question.

* "There had been," says Giraldus, "*no Archbishops in Ireland*, but only Bishops, who ordained the one the other in turns, until John Papyrio, the Legate of the Romish See, came there a few years ago. He brought four Palls to Ireland;" viz. for the four archiepiscopal Sees. Hence it is certain that the Irish Bishops had no previous connexion with Rome.

The Irish nation in general is certainly not aware of the opinion Pope Adrian had of their church, as it was in his time. As, however, it will shew that this Pope, who, in his benevolence, gave *all Ireland* to Henry II. considered the church, which was founded by St. Patrick, and continued to this King's reign, as *ignorant of the truth*; and that he

* Archiepiscopi vero in Hiberniâ nulli fuerant: sed tantum se episcopi invicem consecrabant: donec Johannes Papyrio, Romanæ sedis Legatus non multis retró annis advenit. Hic quatuor Pallia in Hiberniam portavit.—*Top. Hib. lib. 3. cap. 17.*

commissioned Henry to make the church of Rome to extend to it, (which it therefore did not do so before,) a translation merits insertion.

* “ Adrian, Bishop, servant of the servants of God,

* Ab Adriano Papa—privilegium obtinuit ejusdem auctoritate et assensu Hibernico populo tam dominandi, quam ipsum in fidei rudimentis incultissimum ecclesiasticis normis et disciplinis, *juxta Anglicanæ ecclesiæ mores* informandi. Erat itaque tenor hoc.

Adrianus Episcopus, servus servorum Dei, charissimo in Christo filio illustri Anglorum Regi salutem et apostolicam benedictionem. Laudabiliter et fructuosè de glorioso nomine propagando in terris, et æterno felicitatis præmio cumulando in cœlis, tua magnificentia cogitat, cum ad dilatandos ecclesiæ terminos, ad declarandum *indoctis* et rudibus populis Christianæ fidei veritatem, et vitiorum plantaria de agro dominico extirpanda, sicut Catholicus Princeps intendis. Ad id convenientius exequendum, consilium apostolicæ sedis exigit et favorem. In quo facto quanto altiori consilio, et majori discretionem procedis, tanto in eo feliciorum progressum te, præstante domino, confidimus habiturum, eo quod amplius ad bonum exitum semper et finem soleant attingere, quæ de ardore fidei et religionis amore principum acceperunt. Sane *Hiberniam et omnes insulas, quibus sol justitiæ illuxit, et quæ documenta fidei Christianæ acceperunt, ad jus B. Petri et sacrosanctæ Romanæ Ecclesiæ*, (quod tua etiam nobilitas recognoscit,) *non est dubium pertinere*. Unde tanto in eis libentius *plantationem fidelem et germen gratum Deo inseruimus*, quanto id a nobis interno examine districtius prospicimus exigendum. Significasti siquidem nobis, fili in Christo charissime, te Hiberniæ insulam ad subdendam illum populum legibus, et vitiorum plantaria inde extirpanda velle intrare, et de singulis domibus annuam unius denarii B. Petro velle solvere pensionem. et jura ecclesiarum illius terræ illibata et integra conservare. Nos itaque pium et laudabile desiderium tuum cum favore congruo prosequentes, et petitioni tuæ benignum impendentes assensum, gratum velle et acceptum habemus, ut pro *dilatandis*

to our dearly beloved in Christ, the illustrious King of England, health and our Apostolic benediction."

"Your Highness's intent of spreading a glorious name on earth, and of increasing your reward of eternal felicity, is both laudable and beneficial. Since your intent is, as a *Catholic Prince*, to extend the limits of the church, to declare the truth of the *Christian faith* to untaught and rude tribes, and to extirpate the shoots of vices from the ground of the Lord; for the more convenient performance whereof, you require the council and favour of the Apostolic See; in this design we are persuaded you will have the happier success, the more respectable the advice, and the greater the discretion, with which you proceed, because that these things always are more happy in the event, and, in general, attain the end which set out from the ardour of faith, and the love of religion.

ecclesiæ terminis, pro vitiorum restringendo decursu, pro corrigendis moribus et virtutibus inserendis, pro Christianæ religionis augmento, insulam illam ingrediariis; et quæ ad honorem Dei, et salutem illius terræ spectaverint, exequaris. Et illius terræ populus honorificè te recipiat et sicut dominum veneretur; jure nimirum ecclesiarum illibato et integro permanente, et salva B. Petro, et sacrosanctæ ecclesiæ Romanæ de singulis domibus annuâ unius denarii pensione. Si ergo quod concepisti animo, effectum duxeris prosequente complendum, stude gentem illam bonis moribus informare, et agas tam per te quam per alios, quos ad hoc fide, verbo, et vita idoneos esse perspexeris, ut decoretur ibi ecclesia, plantetur et crescat fidei Christianæ religio, et quæ ad honorem Dei, et salutem pertinent animarum per te taliter ordinentur, ut a Deo sempiternæ mercedis cumulum consequi merearis, et in terris gloriosum nomen valeas in seculis obtinere.

“ There certainly is *no doubt* but that *Ireland*, and *all the islands* on which Christ, the Sun of Justice, has shined, and which have received instructions as to the Christian faith, *belong* to the estate of St. Peter, and of the Holy Roman church (which your Highness acknowledges). And therefore we have the more willingly * grafted into them a faithful plant, and a seed acceptable to God, inasmuch as we perceive, by close examination, it ought to be done speedily. Now, most dearly beloved Son in Christ, since you have signified to us that you intend to enter Ireland, in order to bring that nation to submit to laws, and for the extirpating the shoots of vices, and that you intend that there *shall be* an *annual payment* to the blessed St. Peter of a penny from each house, and to keep the rights of the church of that land uninjured and entire; we, for the furtherance of your design, with suitable approbation, graciously assent to your petition (considering your wish as pleasing and acceptable), that, in order *to extend the limits of the church*, to repress the course of vice, to correct the manners, ingraft virtues, and *give increase to the Christian religion*, you may enter upon that island, and act as shall conduce to the honour of God, and the welfare of that country. May that country receive you with honour, and venerate you as its Lord, that is to say, the rights of St. Peter, and the Holy Roman church, remaining safe and entire, and saving the annual payment of a penny

* This probably alludes to the See of St. David's.

from each house to St. Peter. If, therefore, you accomplish your design, be it your endeavour to civilize that nation; and, both personally, and by others, whom for their faith, doctrine, and life, you shall see to be proper persons, to make the church flourish there, that *the Christian religion may be PLANTED and grow there*; and, in like manner, to regulate what appertains to the honour of God, and the salvation of souls. So may you deserve an ample eternal reward from God, and, on earth, obtain a glorious name from age to age."

From this * Bull it appears (and it is necessary,

* It is very remarkable that his Holiness, who was an Englishman, does not say a word of *St. Patrick*; neither does he, or Giraldus Cambrensis, who would have been delighted with such an account, mention a word of St. Patrick's having been sent from Rome to convert the Irish, as a ground of claim to spiritual authority over Ireland; and yet, if any record to the purpose had been known in his time, he could not well be ignorant of it; nor is it probable that he would not have been happy to advance such an argument. Was the legend of St. Patrick then forged after the date of this Bull, and interpolated into Bede, &c? It is extremely probable. Such a tale as his having been at Rome was much wanted; and, in an age abounding with forgeries, this might well find a place. Bishop Nicholson quotes the *Cambrensis Eversus* of Lynch for an assertion, that Giraldus had destroyed many of the old Irish annals, of which he had the perusal. And, as so little remains of the history of the Irish church, before the church of Rome seized upon it, which is not in conformity to her wishes, it is very probable that it was a part of the policy of that church at that time to destroy them, as Bishop Nicholson himself complains of the scarcity of records, ecclesiastical and civil, in Ireland. The same complaint is made in Wales, where every inquiry tends to prove that the records were destroyed or carried off for the purpose above mentioned.

in reading ecclesiastical history, to observe it), that all Christian churches, by whomsoever founded, or how different soever they might be in doctrine or discipline, were, by the policy of the church of Rome, in the middle ages at least, *to be considered as belonging to that church*, and subject, or such as ought to be made subject, conformable, and tributary to that church.

It appears, secondly, that at the time when this Bull was sent to Henry II. the Irish church was neither *subject*, *conformable*, nor *tributary* to the church of Rome.

And this is confirmed by signal circumstances, viz. That no Pall had before this time been sent thither from Rome, and from *the Address* of the Bull itself; for had it been otherwise, the Bull would have been addressed *to the clergy of Ireland*, commanding them to conform; nor could the words *planting* the Christian religion in Ireland, or *extending the limits*, that is, the pale of the Romish church, with any appearance even of propriety have been used.

Lastly, it appears evidently, from the whole business, that the Roman Catholics of Ireland *did go out* of their ancient church, and did go, in fact, by being *forced* to it, and much against their will.

If this wanted more proof, it may be found in what occurred after the council of Dublin, under King John. The people of Connaught* burned the churches,

* *Ecclesiis igne consumptis in nostræ gentis injuriam cruce et imagines sanctorum ad terram deponentes in hostium prospectum, per campestria projecerunt.*—*Gir. Camb. Hib. Expug. lib. 2. cap. 17.*

took down the crosses, and images of the saints, and threw them away in the sight of the enemy, to show their resentment to the English. Let it now be judged in what latitude the expression of not going out of any church can rationally be taken, and how far merit attaches to those who have, and those who have not, gone out of other churches; and whether Popery was not as much a misfortune to Ireland, in its introduction there, as it has been by its continuance.

As the question, "How it has happened that the natives of Wales should so readily have embraced *the new faith* at the time of the Reformation, while those of Ireland remained unmoved," is again asked, it would be a great deficiency to leave it unanswered.

In objecting to the statement of the question, as to the words *new faith*, I by no means impute any intentional error to the Hon. Author in point of fact; on the contrary, I give him full credit for having stated the case as he believed it to be, though I hope to prove satisfactorily that they merely *returned to their old faith*. It has been already shewn, that the Welsh differed from Rome as to their principles of religion in some remarkable points, at the time when Austin came to preach to the Saxons; and the dissension between the Welsh Bishops and him did not tend to give the Welsh a very favourable opinion of his doctrines. The aversion to the Romish doctrines was not lessened by the inroads of the Saxons, nor did the Welsh poets fail to keep it alive. This is proved by a quotation from an ancient Welsh poem, given by Archbishop Usher. As the translation quoted by the Archbishop is an old one, and does not give

the sense fully, the original, with a more correct translation, is here presented to the reader.

Gwae offeiriad mud
 Ni anghreiffia gwyd,
 Ag ni phregetha,
 Ni warcheidw ei gail
 Ag ef yn fugail
 Ac nis areilia
 Gwae ni cheidw ei ddefaid
 Rhag bleiddiau'r Rhufeiniaid
 Ai ffon gnwppa.

“ Woe to the priest that is dumb ; who reproveth not sin, and preacheth not ; who watcheth not over his flock, nor defendeth it, though he be a shepherd ; nor keepeth his sheep in safety from the Romish wolves, and their crooked staff.”

It is deserving of notice, that when this poem was written, which it probably was in the tenth century, that the Welsh Bishops did not bear the crooked (*i. e.* the pastoral) staff, as the Romish Bishops did.

Taliesin also, in his poem, called the Primary Gratulation (published in the Welsh Archaology), affords a very decisive proof that the Welsh, in his time, had no idea of the office attributed by the modern church of Rome to St. Peter. He says,

Pwy gw'r Porthawr ?
 Pwy y Periglawr ?
 Y fab Mair mwynfawr.

“ Who is the *Porter*, or *Door-keeper* ?” (of heaven ;)
 “ who is the Intercessor ? The great and beneficent Son of Mary.”

Had Taliesin held the Romish doctrine, his answer to the first question would almost infallibly have been *St. Peter*, and, like the simple King Oswy, he would have congratulated himself on having St. Peter as the *heavenly porter*.

In none of the works of the earliest Welsh poets, published in the *Archæology of Wales*, is there any trace of the invocation of saints. The first instance I find of it is in a poem of Golyddan, nearly a century *after the arrival of Austin*. In the 11th century it was frequent, but it was the Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. John, and St. David, who were invoked: St. Peter is scarcely noticed till the 14th century. In the 12th century the aversion to Rome was strongly marked by the following lines of one of the poets of that time.

Credwch a glywch, cedwch Dewi
Yn eich llaw, a llu bydd gyd a chwi.
A'r fagl awr ei phen, ffowch rhagddi
Fel tan tost; ydd wan, tyst Duw iti.

That is, "Believe in, hearken, and adhere to David, and a host will be with you. As for the * golden-headed crosier, fly from it, as from wild-fire, for God knows that it is of little avail."

In the same poem are also the following lines.

Edewis Padrig drwy dir dagreu
Lloneid Llech llafar hygar hygleu
Pan aeth i Werddon y wrth ynteu.

* This crosier was that of the Romish church.

“ St. Patrick, when he left the pleasant and celebrated abode near * Lech lafar, to go to Ireland, parted from him (St. David) with many a bitter tear.”

According to this account St. Patrick went thither immediately from St. David's.

These poems, and others of the kind, handed down to posterity, and the knowledge of their history, could not fail to make them rejoice at a separation from Rome. It was to them to be, *as they had been*, so far. It is also true that the family of Tudor being on the throne of England, the Welsh were naturally more disposed to agree with the changes they introduced; and it may not be going too far to imagine, that as Henry VIII. could scarcely be ignorant that his ancestors had refused to acknowledge the Pope's supremacy, he might have had the less, if any scruple, in following their example.

But there was also much pious care taken to give the Welsh a knowledge of the Scriptures, and much liberality in the doing of it. The Scriptures were very soon translated into Welsh. An † individual, whose name deserves to be recorded, published, A.D. 1630, a small edition, at his own expense, for the use of those who could not afford to purchase the larger edition. The clergy did their duty with much and continued zeal and care. They studied *the language*, they preached, they prayed in *it* diligently, they *published religious books* in it from time to time, they

* Lech lafar was in the cemetery of St. David's.—See Giraldus Camb.

† Sir Thomas Middleton, of Chirk-Castle.

were *assiduous in spiritual attentions* to their flock, and the success was proportional.

With respect to Ireland, the disturbed state of the kingdom permitted Elizabeth to do but little, and her successor James inherited nothing of her capacity as a Sovereign. The mantle fell upon his shoulders, but the grand and penetrating spirit, which it had before invested, fell not with it. Else, when, by the recession of the Jesuit Fitzsimmons, this champion of the Romish cause had fairly given it up to the cogency of the arguments of the amazingly learned Usher (afterwards Archbishop, but then a beardless youth), had the proper care been taken, the Reformation, and the work of conversion since, might have been equally as successful in Ireland as it was in Wales, and it be, *as it had been*, free from *the ingraftings* and the control of the church of Rome.

Alas! for Ireland!

Deprived of its pristine honours of Christianity pure in its origin and succession, and a church independent of foreign control, the records of its excellence destroyed, its faith corrupted, its revenues made tributary to a foreign Bishop, and, in the election of its venerable pastors, its own Bishops compelled to exchange the suffrages of their brethren at home for the mandate of a distant despot; and for what?—Even now, after six centuries of a submission, which, had it been well founded, would have been respectable for its fidelity, one of the warmest advocates for an extension of privileges to those who promote and strive to perpetuate its subjugation, pitying the state of his countrymen of that persuasion, exclaims, in the

fervour of his eloquence, "Make them *Christians*." But how is the Romish religion to do this? Will it give them the use of that Bible which is the history, the evidence, and the law of Christianity? Will it free their minds from superstitious observances, and an ignorant devotion? Will it teach, as a duty, that philanthropy which holds persecution for religious differences in abhorrence, and encourage that cultivation of the understanding which gives to man the best use of the distinguishing faculties that raise him above the brute. These things it dares not to do, because it cannot without risking its own destruction, and it therefore has done none of them as to the lower orders; and if the higher have information, it is because, in general, it could not be withheld, where the very intercourse of common life necessarily diffuses it. Some portion of illumination it could not avoid receiving, where the overpowering gloom of Papal superstition had been so much dispersed; but still, among the lower orders, where is the improvement? Are they less bigotted, less superstitious, less ignorant? or are they more moral, more industrious, or more intelligent, than they were centuries ago, in Ireland, in Italy, or in Spain? The very acknowledgments of the Hon. Author give no encouragement to think they are.

Perhaps that may here be repeated in reply, which has of late been rather unhappily insisted upon, viz. that * "to the Roman Catholic religion every nation in Europe owes its laws, constitu-

* Letter to a Member of Parliament, p. 22.

tion, arts, sciences, Christianity, and civilization.”—In this assertion the Greek church, at least, seems to have been overlooked, and the original Christian churches of Britain and Ireland to be considered as derived from a church of Rome, whose doctrines were *the same* with those which are now professed under the name of Roman Catholic. This most certainly was not the case. How far the Saxons were humanized by the preaching of Austin, the massacre of above a thousand monks at Bangor may stand as a tolerable criterion. But as the assertion extends so widely, the proper answer will be a statement of facts, as to the several particulars. First, then, as to the laws. Those of Russia, Denmark, and Sweden, no inconsiderable part of Europe, should be excluded from the assertion, as the influence of the church of Rome never extended so as to affect the laws of Russia, and probably not much, if at all, to affect those of Denmark or Sweden. And as to the laws of the rest of Europe, it certainly did zealously endeavour to introduce the code of Justinian into every legislation, because it had been the law of Rome, and the adoption of it would keep alive a general respect for Rome: yet even of this code the greater part was not of Roman Catholic, but of *Pagan* institution. But there was also another motive for the introduction of the civil law: it was the law of despotism and arbitrary Government. Its very leading principles are, * *the will of the Sovereign*

* Quod Principi placuit legis habet vigorem.—Imperator solus et conditor et interpres legis existimatur.—Sacrilegii instar est rescripto Principis obviare.

is law: the Sovereign alone is the maker and the interpreter of the law: it is next to sacrilege to oppose the decision of the Sovereign:—principles which the Popes found the means of adapting no less to spiritual than to temporal power. For the extent of this law, and these principles, a great part of Europe is certainly indebted to the Roman-Catholic religion. England, however, was somewhat refractory on the occasion. It was attached to the laws derived from times of Paganism; and opposed the *Nolumus leges Angliæ mutari* to the strongest temptations that were offered to induce it to adopt the civil code in its temporal courts. As to the ecclesiastics, they very dutifully obeyed their supreme head; withdrew themselves from the temporal courts; and, in courts of their own, adhered to the civil law; but, whether with advantage to the public, may be questioned.

As to the common law of England, its principles were established antecedent to the introduction of Christianity, and it owes nothing to Rome but the endeavour to subvert it.

The statute law, to the end of the reign of Henry VIII. was indeed enacted by those who professed the Romish religion, as to their faith; but they had in Wales an example of resistance to the court of Rome, which probably was not without its effect. At least, they distinguished, in the most pointed manner, between the faith and the court of Rome. The statutes of mortmain, provisors, and premunire, will forcibly demonstrate how fatal to the interests of Britain was the tendency of its connexion with Rome, and that the most wholesome laws by statute could owe no-

thing to the religion of those times. It has already been shewn, that Magna Charta was no way a consequence of it, as the argument, if it means any thing to the purpose, should assume. Neither were the juridical institutions of the first Edward any consequences of it; but rather the reverse. As to the constitution of England, it grew out of causes perfectly distinct from religion, as far as it proceeded, until the time of the Reformation; it grew out of the struggles of a spirited and wealthy nation with the almost absolute power of the Crown.

In a political point of view, the direct tendency of the whole system of the Romish doctrines is *to favour absolute power*. Enslaving the mind from infancy, by forbidding research on the subjects the most important to human beings; making the conduct the mere instrumental effect, by the direction of its superiors, as far as it can be done; and though it may be true, that the glaring contrast, which the avarice and ostentation of the clergy exhibited with the doctrine of many of its teachers, as to the merits of benevolence and humiliation; did, when irritated by the defalcations of natural rights of property or privileges, rouse the sense of natural justice to oppose the clergy in these respects; in others, they were too much habituated to assent, to dare to inquire; and to obey, to dare to resist. In men thus dependent upon, and guided by, the clergy, whose power they consider as deciding upon their eternal salvation, and whose influence over all their actions is so unlimited by the intervention of confession, the mind must necessarily, except in a few, and uncommon cases, be broken

down from that strength and energy of inquiry, upon which alone a rational system of conduct, private or public, can be founded.

Yet even these, were the minds of the instructors themselves free, would be, by so much, the less an evil; but it is not in the nature of despotism to neglect any link of the chain that binds its victims. In the whole gradation of the priesthood, every inferior is firmly bound in his obedience to his superior; and the Sacred College guides the whole with a firm and assured hand, confident of a general implicit submission from a body, whose interests it has found means to detach from the general interests of mankind, and the local ones of inheritance and family; and to make them its own, by including all prospect of temporal advantage, as much as possible, within its own power to confer. Thus the *esprit de corps* co-operates to the utmost with the superior power; and as it is uniformly found to act with the greatest force, where the command is the most absolute, so is dissent, or deficiency in deference, punished with the utmost rigour.

There are but two distinct principles upon which power can be maintained, or submission secured. It must either be force, in which no discussion of the principle can be permitted; or an equitable moral necessity, in which a rational investigation proves the necessity and the equity. In practical Government, absolute power must borrow so much of the moral principle as to give some colour to its pretensions; and a Government founded on the equitable moral necessity must have sufficient power to enforce its regulations. There will, however, the decisive dif-

ference subsist between them, that the former dreads, and the latter does not fear, investigation ; but, on the contrary, rather encourages it. Hence then it is that a sect, subject to such a domination as that of the Romish church, must be inimical to freedom of opinion, and to the policy of a free state. Its title must not be scrutinized upon rational principles, but upheld by blind assent, or the submission of ignorance ; by a devotion without knowledge, the impressions of superstition, or whatever else can divorce the understanding from the imagination, or impress such associations of ideas on the imagination, that, spell-bound, as it were, it shall be incapable, or afraid, of exerting the powers of the understanding.

It is then to the Reformation only that Britain owes the superiority of her code over that of any other nation. With it the spirit of rational inquiry went forth from the imprisonment, in which Rome held, and still would hold it captive, and its progress was illuminated by the radiations of sacred truth. The social duties were learned and impressed upon the mind from the pure word of God ; the governors and governed became equally acquainted with all, that is necessary to common life, of the revealed will of him who formed them for their mutual benefit. Hence the laws assumed a milder spirit, and the obedience of principle succeeded to the obedience of necessity ; and hence only can be solved the difficulty, which De Lolme states, of accounting for the tranquil and prompt obedience to the laws in this country. It is because the people learn their duty, not from what a man like themselves may tell them, but from divine

authority itself, unsophisticated by human comment, and equally open to, and equally obligatory on, the Legislature and the people, the teacher and the taught.

What the sciences owe to the Romish religion may be comprehended in a few words. Some knowledge of the Latin tongue was indispensable to ecclesiastics ; and whilst superior knowledge could be confined in general to them, and a few more in the higher rank of society, the ecclesiastical order preserved with great care all the records of antiquity, from which no danger to their church was apprehended. Others, however, they interpolated, or destroyed, with equal care. How far that religion was favourable to science, the fate of Roger Bacon and Galileo, as to individuals, and the state of science in the two kingdoms the most devoted to Rome, Spain and Portugal, may determine conclusively. Is it favourable to science, that a man dare not suggest a new idea, in many respects, without being liable to be punished as suspected of heresy? Yet such are the effects of the Romish religion, where it has the power.

But to pursue the subject a little further. To whom are we properly indebted for the arts and sciences? To Egypt, to Asia, and to Greece, for astronomy, medicine, logic, mathematics, oratory, and history ; and for their greatest improvements in science to Protestants, chiefly Sir Francis Bacon, Newton, Boyle, Locke, Harvey, Boerhaave, and Linnæus. The men who have made new, and the greatest, aeras in the progress of science, were Protestants ; and it was the misfortune of Galileo to have

been otherwise, entitled as he was to rank with them. When it is also remembered, that even the learned members of that once-powerful body, the Jesuits, were obliged to apologize for their Commentary on the Principia of Newton, by waving the consideration of the truth of the principle, and professing to consider the work merely as an hypothesis, so far useful as it might be applied to the explanation of the mundane system, it is to be hoped the argument of the Romish religion's being favourable to science may not be insisted upon.

The systems of Christian doctrines which the church of Rome has propagated, at various times, have been so different, that it would be very difficult for one who compared them to recognise the first in the last, so much of the foundation has the superstructure subverted or obscured. The first received in this island was Christianity in its primitive form; the second, Christianity in a state rapidly declining from its original purity: but still it was of value, as leading to a knowledge of the true God, and preparing the way for a more perfect knowledge. But as the difference between the primitive and the modern Christianity of Rome has been already noticed in part, and will hereafter be somewhat further considered, it shall suffice here to attend to other statements in favour of the modern Romish religion, which appear to require it.

This religion is said * "to form" (in the present day) "the belief of the wisest politicians, and the most

* P. 2.

enlightened people, adapting its forms and discipline to all the gradations of Governments, from the most absolute, as it was lately in France, to the most free and popular, as in the democratic states of Switzerland."

That, in the above description, the wisdom of policy is measured by a French scale, there can be little doubt. It is one which certainly pays no compliment to this country; neither is it material, since that which seeks the happiness of the nation internally, rather than false glory, and the subjugation of others, will preserve its own pre-eminence in wisdom, independently of the imaginary estimation, which the glare of the immediate effects is calculated to produce.

It is, however, extraordinary, that the ready adaptation of a religion to any form of Government should be represented as a recommendation, and in particular that to despotism. Can that religion be from the God of the universe, and the supreme common Father of all mankind, which will adapt itself to, and coalesce amicably with, a form of Government in which all the nation must be submitted to the arbitrary and uncontrolled pleasure, passions, weaknesses, or extravagancies, incidental to a single human being, subject to like infirmities with themselves? Would this be consistent with the beneficence of the Deity? Most certainly not; though such certainly is the direct political tendency of the Romish religion. Christianity in its purity does not directly interfere with, much less adapt itself to, any form of Govern-

ment. Its influence is directed to the morals of the Sovereign and the people alike, and its natural effect is, by the purity of morals and beneficence of intention in ALL, to produce without violence, and gradually, a wise, just, and beneficent policy, which will never arise from any other causes. It forbids alike factions, and rebellions, or tumultuous dispositions in the subject, and oppression in the rulers, with the awful denunciation, that He, whose attributes are impartial justice, and unerring wisdom, will demand an account of the manner in which their several duties have been performed. It is so far from adapting itself to forms of Government, that it requires, that, whatever be the form, the spirit of that form should, in wisdom, in justice, and beneficence, be adapted to it. And happy would it be for man that they were so. The versatility of the Romish religion was well known to the present Government of France. It is, said one of that Government, then high in office, *a sieve that will let any politics through*; and upon this principle it was re-established there: and it may be hoped it is a principle upon which it may not be encouraged here.

It is asked by the Hon. Author of *The Considerations*, "What evils, or if any evils, were experienced by themselves, or their cause, in consequence of that partial removal of grievances, which they deplored, and against which they rioted? Has Popery, as they predicted, increased with a giant's growth? and has the Ark of the Covenant been exposed to ruin? Rather, have not the bonds of Christian fellowship

been drawn closer between all parties? have not animosities and mutual prejudices been weakened, and the general cause of the country benefited?"

Would to God that these questions could truly be answered according to the wish with which they are evidently proposed; for it is by no means a pleasing task, however needful it may be, to do otherwise. In reply, however, it must be asked, have the expectations of the tranquillity of Ireland, which in every application to the Irish or English Legislature have been given by the friends of Catholics, been realized? Has that country known more internal peace in consequence of the * concessions already made? Or have not the concessions already made brought forth pretty plain intimations that more *must*? If then no particular evil complained of by the Protestants has ceased, (and there is much reason to think so,) this itself is an evil, and a great one.

The growth of Popery, like the growth of every thing else, must, however favoured, require some time to develop itself fully to the general eye, as to the influence it may acquire in gaining proselytes. But so much has been done to favour its growth, that the most diligent care of those, whose peculiar duty it is, will be requisite to oppose it. Are they not giant-strides to have a distinct † College established in

* In sound policy, perhaps, the mode of concession should have been reversed, and began with the higher orders of Roman Catholics, and the elective franchise have been the last.

† At the time when it was proposed in the Irish House of Commons to afford to the Catholics the means of education at

Ireland for the especial purpose of educating priests for that communion ; and, according to the statement

home, by their having seminaries of their own, the late Lord Clare, then Mr. Fitzgibbon, one of the best and greatest characters that Ireland could boast, said in reply to Mr. Gardiner, "After what has been done for the Roman Catholics ; after we have gone more than half-way to meet them, will it be said that they should not come one step to meet us? Will they continue to send their children to France, to Spain, to Portugal, to imbibe principles of freedom, or attach them to the constitution of this country? Or will you suffer the Roman Catholics to resort to regions of bigotry—to imbibe principles of positive obedience, and every idea hostile to liberty?—The University of Dublin is open to them, and if they decline the advantage, it is not on account of religion, for *no religious conformity will be required, but for fear their children should in early life imbibe the PRINCIPLES of A FREE CONSTITUTION.*"

From the account of the College of Maynooth, which has appeared in some of the daily papers, as extracted from papers laid before the House of Commons, and in the Monthly Magazine with comments no way unfavourable, it is very evident that the words of Lord Clare are fully verified. If the first question were again to be asked at this day, what must the answer be? Have the Catholics in any one instance come a step forward to meet the liberality of the Protestants? It is much to be feared that it would be impossible to mention one. I know of none.

Is then the system of education in the College of Maynooth such as to promise any thing better than an education in Spain or Portugal? Or has it any tendency to counteract those principles of passive obedience, and every, or any, idea hostile to liberty? Let the following rules of this College determine.

"The bye laws chiefly relate to the internal regulation, enforcing much of the *discipline, and formality of monachism.*—The students are to be obedient to their President, *not to yield too far to the dictates of their own understanding, and to use only such books as shall be recommended by the President and Pro-*

of a writer (the Author of the Letters from England), who appears to be well informed on the subject,

fessors.—The statutes are employed in describing the duties and qualifications of the members—The Dean inspects manners and morals—Let him accurately examine the books, and, upon a very just suspicion, by permission of the President, let him *examine the writing-desks and papers.*—The great vacation lasts two months, but “*even then no student can absent himself without leave from his Bishop;*” they, for the most part, therefore, *remain the whole year.*

If ever there can be a seminary capable of ensuring passive obedience, this is one. What the formality and discipline of monachism are, the public is pretty well informed by Kotzebue's extracts from the Memoirs of Schad; and it must be an untractable spirit indeed which cannot be broken by an imprisonment of two years, penances, and fastings to boot. Telling of tales, in the mean time, is amply provided against by the clause, which in the newspapers is *prudently given in Latin*, viz. that which empowers the Dean to *examine the desks and papers* of the students. Such is the liberal system of the College of Maynooth.

A very pompous display of authors to be read is detailed, but how much of them may be read is to be prescribed and limited. The students are not to know any thing *but by permission*; and, thus *enslaved* in mind to Rome, they are prepared to impress the same *slavish submission* on others, and, as far as in them lies, to subdue all to the Papal power. The writer of the account in the Monthly Magazine laments, with a kind of burlesque pathos, that the students are not better supplied as to a knowledge of the Scriptures; and in truth it is most pitiable. In opposition to the right of private judgment, he is careful to mark that the Catholic swears that he never will take and interpret the Scriptures, but according to the *unanimous consent* of the Fathers. If they do take such an oath it is a *very bold one*, and the surest mode of keeping it will be *not to interpret them at all* upon controverted points. An endeavour has indeed been made to obtain somewhat of this unanimity in the works of the Fathers, by expunging

there are not less in this country than *seven* colleges, *twenty-three* schools or academies, and *seventeen* establishments of nuns; to have their chapels free of resort, and their religious publications issue free from the press, and to be distributed without restriction; all which has been done within a few years? What more could have been done to facilitate

passages which are against the doctrines of Rome; and an index of these *expurgations*, as they are called, has been published. This is certainly one way of making them unanimous, but not very consistent with a love of truth, though it satisfy the Doctors of Maynooth, and is sanctioned by the council of Trent.

It may well make a Protestant's heart ache to think, that, whilst such a seminary of error has found such strenuous support and ample endowment, the Episcopalian Bishops and Clergy of Scotland are obliged to *solicit private subscriptions* to make out a bare provision. This is not, and it cannot come to, good.

And here it may not be improper to notice a curious circumstance relative to the money solicited from Parliament last year for its support. The sum proposed for it was £1,300; and that for the Protestant Society for the Promotion of Religion and Virtue, proposed at the same time, was just £50 less. Whence then this difference, so *nicely* marked? Without scrutinizing the motives of this difference, it shall suffice to bring to the reader's recollection a circumstance that took place at Vienna, when the late Pope paid a visit to that city. When preparations were making for the Pope to appear at Mass, as the Emperor was also to be present, a difficulty arose as to the *comparative elevation* of the thrones of the Emperor and the Pope; and as Braschi insisted on some, though ever so small, a superiority in this respect, the thrones were prepared so, that the Pope's was about *three inches* higher than that of the Emperor. But, when the Pope went to church, he found that the Emperor had had the good sense to decline being present, and to order the throne intended for his Imperial Majesty to be removed.

its growth, it is not easy to imagine. To the ignorant among the Protestants there may be some danger from these, but it is to such only. Surely it may be hoped that the unfounded and absurd doctrine of transubstantiation will not, in this enlightened age, as it is called, long disgrace a church that calls itself Christian, and that the Roman Catholics may be emancipated from their spiritual bondage. The Concordat has done something; and perhaps, in the present state of political knowledge, that church may find it expedient to expound her definition of absolution so far, as that no fanatic may presume upon it as a sanction to one of the worst evils that any individual, or any state, can fear.

Whether, by the late concessions to the Roman Catholics, "the bonds of charity have been drawn closer," it is too early perhaps to determine. That they may have been, and be so, is devoutly to be wished.

The Hon. Author observes, that "There is, in Englishmen, a horror of the thing called Popery (which, by the bye, we have disclaimed), nourished by all the habits of education, which no efforts on our side, and, in the best-disposed minds, no suggestion of reason, can effectually remove. The clergy of the establishment, I am told, have sedulously watered this plant, seemingly not aware, that a strong cause, such as theirs has long been, stands in need of no such support."

That men should have a horror of doctrines which they not only conceive, but have by experience found, to tend to the subversion of their religious and political establishments, and that they should not be pre-

capitate in admitting the force of representations not easily reconciled either with past experience, doctrines still maintained, or views extended beyond them, is as natural as it is a prudence of necessity. A truly religious man must feel a horror of doctrines of Paganism taught as doctrines of the Scriptures; and others, directly opposite to those of Scripture and the primitive church, taught as Christianity. How far Popery is disclaimed by the Roman Catholics of these kingdoms depends upon the definition of the word *Popery* itself.

That which, in propriety of language, constitutes Popery, is, even from the word itself, evidently in its original sense, an adherence to the Pope, whether in his temporal or spiritual capacity. And in its legal and proper acceptation it is, I believe, used to signify acknowledgment of the spiritual power assumed by the Pope over the Romish church, as supreme; and an adherence to the peculiar doctrines of the church, which acknowledges him as its head.

Hence, therefore, it follows, that though a few exceptionable doctrines be disclaimed, this is not a disclaiming of Popery itself, but of *a part* of what is included under the name. To have given up the doctrines of the infallibility of the Pope, and deposition of Sovereigns, is no more than what the Gallican church had done before. To have given up that of extermination of those who differ from them, whether for political or merely benevolent reasons, is what France itself did at last, and too late; and what many good men of that church had abhorred; though they acknowledged the spiritual supremacy of the Pope,

and the doctrines of the Romish church, as true. And possibly the signal manner in which Divine Providence has poured out the vial of retributive wrath on the church of France, during the Revolution, may be an awful and salutary warning to it to abstain from such attempts in future.

The horror, then, which Englishmen feel, may still justly prevail, unless the dangers to the church or state are sufficiently obviated. Whether any suggestions of reason, strong enough, upon rational principles, to remove their apprehensions, have been offered to them, may be liable to very different decisions from those who wish to impress them as such, and those to whom they are addressed; especially where their interests are concerned. The ardour to convince may also overrate the power; and professions, however sincere, if of a kind that is novel from the body that makes them; and, still more, if there be supposed any other principle in that body, which may overturn them, will not be received with the same facility as they would otherwise have been. The peculiar religious doctrines of the church of Rome are such as every Protestant, of whatever denomination, must consider as unscriptural, superstitious, and dangerous to the salvation of souls; and it is therefore much to the credit of the clergy of the church of England, in general, and more particularly to that of the two Universities, that their zeal has called forth an acknowledgment of it.

By what species of allowed logical argument the present constituent members of the University of Oxford are to be inculcated for the conduct of their

predecessors, when they do not imitate it, the most acute logician might be at some difficulty to ascertain. It is true that they dwell within the same walls, and walk the same streets, as they did, who are said to have drank Jacobite toasts ; and as they also did who burned Ridley and Cranmer. If the argument has any weight, they may as well be reproached with the latter as the former circumstance. Possibly the argument may have been advanced as a counterpoise to that objected to the Roman Catholics, of violence and extravagancies of their church some years ago. But if so, the analogy is defective. In the Romish church, the principle of the evils, though perhaps somewhat abated of its force, subsists. In Oxford it subsists no more, and she may be proud of the manner in which she came forward to oppose an inroad on church and state ; and Cambridge, much to her honour, has done the same.

It is asked, " Do these gentlemen" (viz. of Oxford) " never recall to their memories the founders of those noble fabrics, which arrest the attention of the man of taste, and of the reflecting scholar, by whom they were so magnificently endowed ? Was it not my own, I could not censure the religion of such men."

I believe it is but doing simple justice to the gentlemen of Oxford to say, that they feel every just sentiment of gratitude and respect to the memory of the pious founders of their University, and think with more pity for, than censure of, their errors, because of the darkness of the age in which they lived. But is an error not to be censured, because a great or good man otherwise has been subject to it ? If so, then

adieu to principle, religious and moral ; for the giving up what is true or right, out of deference to accidental merits, is a dereliction of both ; neither can it be a very correct mind, which, out of respect for the liberality of the man, favours the error, or gives up the sacred obligations to truth and rectitude on such motives.

The observation of the Honourable Author upon the present state of the Church of England most certainly calls for the serious attention of all to whom it applies. He observes, (and, I own, that, as to the lower classes, I fear it is in many instances but too true,) that the Church of England loses ground, and that the number of Dissenters are increasing. But I am very far from assenting to the cause assigned as the real one, viz. " That the doctrines of the Church of England are not so powerfully impressive, even in more favourable circumstances, as some persons are inclined to think." As to the doctrines themselves, it is impossible not to feel astonishment at the imputation *to them* of not being impressive. Is it to be supposed, that the Honourable Author is ignorant that the doctrines of the Church of England are held as the doctrines of the Scriptures, including whatever is directly expressed in them, or may be deduced from them by sound reason, and just inference ? consequently the whole moral law of Scripture, with its awful sanctions ; the belief in the creation of the world, the fall, the redemption in Christ, and a future judgment. What doctrines can be impressive, if these are not so ; that is, as far as regards the doctrines themselves ? But it is undeniable, that their influence

upon those to whom they are preached, or addressed, will depend in a great measure on the abilities, the zeal, and the rhetorical powers of the preacher ; and that zeal, with a moderate degree of knowledge, will do much more than extensive knowledge with little zeal. The conduct of the understanding may be regulated by reason ; it may be informed and convinced by it ; but the energy of its action will ever depend upon the imagination. It is true, that if the judgment be not rightly informed, the imagination does but increase the evil ; but the imagination is not therefore to be neglected ; and that, which is addressed so as to convince the judgment by accurate reasoning, ought to be enforced by exciting the imagination to give it effect ; and this will then be done without danger, for, as the Author truly says, “ Doctrines not enforced by pathos, energy, and the aid of imagery,” (if by the word “ imagery” be understood the imagery of diction,) “ take but a slender hold of the mind.” As to any other imagery, it is one of those things as to which the impressions of the nursery cling to the man. Images were the feeble effort of the infancy of the human understanding, to affect the savage with a belief of the supposed presence of the Deity. It was a means worthy of such a state, and such only. Feeble indeed must that mind be, whose contemplations of the great Creator of heaven and earth can be aided by such means ; means worse than degrading, since they are wholly and absolutely forbidden by Scripture,

The question of granting political power to those of the Roman Catholic persuasion involves little dif-

difficulty in itself, further than as it is a most disagreeable necessity to state that difficulty. It is, however, admitted, that *salus populi suprema lex*; and where it is apprehended that this safety may be endangered, however disagreeable the duty be to point it out, it is still a duty; and it is a question that is already limited in its extent by what has already been granted. One circumstance, in what has been already granted, ought, therefore, surely to have considerable weight as to that which is not so. If, before the elective franchise was conceded to the Roman Catholics, it appeared that there was a necessity for withholding legislative situations from them, the concession of the franchise has, by throwing a greater power into their hands of determining elections, increased that necessity proportionally.

When it is stated, that unpleasant consequences have arisen from the legal restrictions on the Roman Catholics, the truth is certainly stated; and they are very much to be lamented. But when it is stated, that nothing, but the *total* abolition of these restrictions can satisfy the Roman Catholics, it is not so easy to concur with them, that the state, and the constitution, will not be endangered. It is not sufficient to represent, that under a wise and good King, and that by wise Ministers, not bigotted to the Roman Catholic religion, the state would be safe; it is more necessary to consider what might be the case under a weak King, and Ministers bigotted to that religion; since neither the history of any country, nor the variations of human nature, will justify the omission of such a case as impossible in the highest

situation ; and it is not likely that men of that religion, who were intended for eminent situations in the state, would be much neglected as to the impressions of a religious kind.

The foundation of all the restrictions has certainly been laid, and with great justice, in the principles and conduct of the Romish church. If the complaint is made, that the Protestants do not give all the confidence that is looked for, with how much more reason may the whole Protestant world complain, that the disastrous and dreadful tenets of the Romish church, as to its power of absolution, excommunication, and Papal supremacy, which have so often been applied to the annihilation of every tie held sacred among men, have not been so modified by that church itself, as to admit of real confidence.

Since, therefore, so much depends upon the doctrine of absolution, it will not be amiss to examine the principle of these tenets with attention suitable to their importance.

The doctrine of absolution, which has given rise to so many abuses, by the inconsiderate and intemperate application of it, is, in itself, and in its proper use, both well founded and beneficial. Whether the mind be hardened by familiarity with vice, or alive to the most delicate sense of religious duty ; in those awful moments, when it is unnerved by disease, or harassed by pain, it may be little able to act, or judge truly for itself,

“ How stands the great account 'twixt it and heaven !”

How to regulate the despondings of an humble mind, the presumption of the confident, or the

terrors of the guilty. Neither is it the general lot to know how far a just hope of the divine favour may be entertained; what may be considered as sincere and well-grounded in repentance, or effectual in faith. It is too true, that the physician of the soul, like the physician of the body, is too seldom called in till his appearance is felt as the forerunner of the knell, and with as little comfort to himself as such a case can promise. Where, however, it is done *when* it ought, and *as* it ought, it is one of the most important offices of life.

It is with respect to the divine, as it is with respect to human laws; the judge, to whom a decision upon human actions is given or delegated, is bound by the terms of his commission from the lawgiver or Sovereign; and the decision of that judge is no further valid, than as it is according to the law and the terms of such commission. For no lawgiver can rationally be supposed to grant a power, which supersedes his own authority, or which is not liable to his own ultimate cognizance, and (if not according to his intent, and that of his law) to a reversal, whether it exceed, or fall short of it.

If then, for the argument's sake, it were admitted, that the power of absolution were *properly* a *judicial* one, still the reservation of the judgment for the ratification, or reversal, by the Sovereign, would necessarily so remain, as that it could not be absolute and complete in its consequences, till the ratification by the Sovereign should make it so. For though a Sovereign may give what are usually denominated full powers, the condition, though it may not, because of

his confidence in the person, be expressed, is implied the more strongly, that they will no way be abused, but in all respects faithfully applied. Hence also it is an indispensable requisite that the person so empowered should be perfectly adequate to the discharge of his judicial office, both as to probity of character and mental endowments; that his exhibition of the law be faithful and clear, the construction warranted, and the interpretation just, or his decision grounded on either of them will be a * nullity.

If then this be so, as to concerns merely human, much more necessarily must it be so as to concerns whose importance is infinite; and it is proportionably inconsistent with sound reason (and indeed with the Scriptures, as I shall soon hope to prove) to imagine that, in the power which Christ has given to the ministers of his word, he could intend to supersede his own, by giving it without any reservation.

As to natural reason, the imperfection of human judgment without immediate inspiration, its inadequacy to analyze correctly the amalgamated mass of faults, and excellencies of vices and virtues, that is the result of human life, and to decide truly on the preponderance, is such, that angels might tremble to hold the balance, wherein the imperfections of the mortal state are weighed with an eternal consequence.

* The See of Rome, in her own practice, is not insensible of the force of this reasoning on the power of the Sovereign, as will appear from her care to insert in her Acts the clause, "*Salvâ sanctâ sede Apostolicâ,*" (*Saving the rights of the See of Rome,*) and from its reservation of cases to its own decision.

Under all this incompetence, if the judgment of man is held to be conclusive, it will involve in it the impious idea of the Deity, that he has committed that portion of his own prerogative, which is of the highest importance to man, to one incapable of its perfect administration ; or, what is equally impious, if not more so, that human actions are indifferent in the sight of him, whose attributes are perfect wisdom and justice.

Hence then it follows, that even a *judicial* absolution by man, in spiritual as well as in temporal concerns, can have no further validity, than as it is conformable to the known will of the Sovereign Lawgiver, and declared by one competent to the office.

But a very little consideration will shew, that the term *judicial* is, as to this point, one of those, which are sometimes adopted as the means of expressing an analogy not clearly conceived ; and which, by that very adoption, leads to error, because of the very imperfection of the term.

He alone, who can read the secrets of the heart, and who at the last day will judge the world in righteousness, can with strictness of truth be said to absolve *judicially*. The term is therefore objectionable, because it is not in its strict sense appropriate, and that hence it is liable to be, and has been, understood as signifying a perfect power of absolution vested in man.

Those who maintain a full judicial power of absolution, and the power claimed by the Pope as the successor of St. Peter, have in general endeavoured to do so on the authority of the words of our Lord to

St. Peter, * *I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*; and the words to the apostles in general, † *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained*. To this if we add a passage, similar in expression, and equally extensive in import, the manner in which the former two are to be understood will appear more conspicuously. ‡ *If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven*. Since this last promise is as general as the former, curiosity might be tempted to inquire, how has it so strangely happened, that the church of Rome has not also asserted, that when any two of her Bishops *agree touching any thing that they shall ask*, that *it shall be done* for them of God; since it is undoubtedly one of the privileges granted to the apostles, and as much so to their successors as the preceding? May not the true reason be, that in this case the evidence, unfortunately for them, would lie *on this side the grave*; and the evidence for the other power is *in another world*? So much only, therefore, has been claimed, as may be asserted, without a possibility of the facts being brought into evidence *in this life*.

Now as the promises are equally general in the expression, would it not have been prudent, at least,

* Matt. xvi. 19.

† John xx. 23.

‡ Matt. xviii. 19.

to examine, whether there were not some implied conditions? We have, as to the latter, an instance in point. From the Epistle of St. James it appears, that there was some complaint of *having asked, and not received*: and the apostle answers them, *Ye ask and receive not, because YE ASK AMISS*. What then shall we say, if *the absolution be given amiss*? Certainly, in like manner, that they who give it *do not absolve*, whatever the conditions be under which this power is said to be granted; and in the like manner, that no other spiritual power, said to be granted, attains its proper effect, unless the conditions be observed; and consequently neither the *binding* nor *loosing*, whatever import be attached to the words.

To transfer the authority of the Pontifices Maximi to the Christian Pontiffs, and establish it in the Christian church, no means could be more effectually conducive than a prevention of the general reading of the Scriptures. The great change in the language of Italy, and the troublous times of the dark ages, did of themselves prevent it, in a great measure, since translations were neither easily made for want of knowledge, nor multiplied for want of the means, which the invention of printing has happily furnished. In such ages a literal acceptance of a literal version might produce in a few cases different effects from the intent of the original, without erroneous intention in the mind of the reader. But here the power assumed by the Popes is so contrary to the whole tenour of Scripture, as to preclude the apology.

We grant that the words, *I will give thee the keys*, &c. were addressed in a pointed manner to St. Peter,

and first to him ; and, by attending to the facts which followed, we learn what those keys were, and why first promised to him. We learn that it was he who first opened the gates of salvation, that is, *made known the doctrine of redemption in Christ*, to the Jews and to the Gentiles : to the former at the day of Pentecost, and to the latter in the family of the Centurion, Cornelius. The words were, therefore, prophetically addressed first to St. Peter, as to this priority *in the promulgation of the Gospel* ; the *only* priority that the Scripture will authorize us in attributing to him over the rest of the apostles.

When, therefore, it is considered, that St. Peter and the rest of the apostles published that covenant which announced salvation to those who accepted it, and condemnation to those who did not, and that they accordingly admitted the former to the communion of the church, and excluded the latter, it is evident that the signification of these metaphorical keys is the authority of the church, as to its communion, and of its ministers individually, who, in the propagation of the Gospel, open the gates of salvation to those who hear them, and exclude from its communion those who reject it.

But there is also another declaration of our Saviour's, which seems to mark a peculiar signification of these keys as to the future state. It is this: "Ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." And St. Paul thus extends its application : * "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world ?—Know ye not that we shall judge angels ?"

* Matt. xix. 28.

1 Cor. vi. 2. and 3.

In such a judicial cognizance in that state, where every thought will be revealed, and every action appear in its true nature, divested of the adventitious and partial colourings of deceit, self-love, or prejudice, the judgment will be (what it ought to be, to be just) correct and true; and if, as it *seems* to be signified, the apostles and saints are to hold a situation as assessors at that awful day, and their judgment, on the full and true display of human conduct, shall absolve or condemn, *then*, I presume, this power of these keys will be exercised in its plenitude. On earth they will have admitted and rejected, as to the church; they will have been the * “savour (or indication) of Christ in them that are saved and them that perish, the savour of death unto death, and of life unto life;” and in the future state they will, as assessors of the tribunal of the Messiah, admit or reject as to the kingdom of his glorification.

But it will be objected, that it is said, *whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*; and that by these words the power of *absolution*, and consequently of *condemnation*, are promised. And, if the words *bind* and *loose* had *any relation* to *condemning* and *absolving*, the objection would be of serious moment.

To prove that they have no such relation, I will appeal to the authority of one of the most learned Rabbinical scholars for some centuries. The very

* 2 Cor. ii. 16, 17.

learned Wagenseil, in his Commentary on the *Sota*, observes, that * “ the Hebrew words, which properly signify *to loose* and *to bind*, are perpetually used by the Rabbins to signify *to permit* or *to forbid*; and that the Hebrew interpreter has so used them as to the very words of our Saviour to St. Peter. If then,” says this candid and learned man, “ our Saviour made use of this most habitual mode of expression among the Jews, when he addressed himself to St. Peter, as it is probable the Syriac interpreter understood it, and the old interpreter of St. Matthew’s Gospel into the Hebrew certainly did, the meaning of the words will be *somewhat different* from what we are commonly taught that it is.”

Very different, indeed! when that which has been said to signify a power of *absolving* and *condemning*, is found in fact to signify merely *the power of declaring*

* אסר (*Asar*)—proprie notat *ligare*, opponiturque huic הִתִּיר (*Hethir*) *solvere*; prius vocabulum, postea, ad res quæ licitæ, posterius ad eas, quæ illicitæ pronunciantur, perpetuo Rabbino- rum usu transfertur.—Si tritissimum inter Judæos loquendi morem expressit Servator cum—loqueretur Petro, quod quidem suspicio est sensisse Syrum, certe *penitus persuasus fuit vetus interpres Hebræus* Evangelii Matthæi—paulo alias utique verborum sensus fuerit, quam quem vulgo edocemur.—*Sota*, p. 13. ed. 1674.

To the above he adds, that, after he had written the observation, he found he had been anticipated in it by Lightfoot.—Vir literatissimus, id quod agere volebamus rerum peritos, jam egisse deprehenditur, et terna testimoniarum decade producta probat illum loci apud Mathæum sensum esse quem ex occulto conjecturavimus.

This very learned man (Lightfoot) has proved, by thirty instances, that the true sense of the passage in St. Matthew is such as I had conjectured.

what the Gospel law was TO PERMIT or FORBID in human conduct. This power they exercised personally by preaching the Gospel and by their writings. It was a complete power in them; and, by means of what they have written, and by the course of regular ordination to the sacred office, has descended to their successors.

What other portions of the promises made by our Saviour to his apostles were to descend to their successors, must, as in this case, be determined by *the result of facts*; because there is an unhappy promptitude in man to assume, unproved, whatever may give him importance with his fellow-creatures, or in his own consideration, which will too often blind him to the force of the evidence that opposes a flattering presumption. It cannot then create any astonishment, that some of the successors of the apostles should have preferred such claims; and, in succeeding them as to the superintendence of the church, should have been ready to conceive that they succeeded to the whole of the apostolic character.

It is alleged, that the promises made to the apostles *included their successors*. But upon what principle this assertion is made, except that of a most determined resolution to assume the fact, it will be very difficult to discover; it may be safely said, impossible. If our Saviour himself had especially said, that the promise was to them, *and their successors*, there would be an end of the question. But as to their successors, not a word is said *of them*. He promised to his church, that * *the gates of hell should*

* Matt. xvi. 18.

*not prevail against it; that * he would be present to its prayers, even where two or three should be gathered together, and that † he would be with it to the end of the world.* And these promises are fulfilled to this day. These are general promises, and, as such, they are accomplished; whereas the promises to the apostles are proved *by facts* to have been *special*, from these words.

These signs shall follow them that believe. ‡ *In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.* Do these signs follow the believers of the present day? Not one of them. Did our Saviour then intend the greater power of complete absolution in this life (if he had given it) to continue, and withdraw the lesser? Or did he intend a difference in the extent of promises, given in a manner precisely similar, to the same persons, without warning them of the distinction? Surely not. The apostles and their immediate converts had these powers, their successors have them not; and it therefore follows evidently, that if their having any other of the powers granted to the apostles be not *proved by facts*, it must be looked upon as a gratuitous assumption, till it is so proved. It is therefore, to say the least of it, a gross

* Matt. xviii. 20.

† Matt. xxviii. 20.

‡ Mark xvi. 17.—These words are a bold and open appeal to *what passed when they were written*, that nothing but the facts could have inspired.

misapplication of the term, to call any power *apostolic*, which has not the distinguishing powers of the apostles, those of *working miracles* and *immediate revelations*, attached to it.

In truth, so far do the apostles seem to have been from entertaining the thought, that their powers were to devolve upon their successors, that they repeatedly and anxiously urge and press upon those, to whom they write, and some of whom they had ordained, the necessity of the utmost care and vigilance to teach *what they had been taught*, and *as they had been taught*; a caution perfectly inconsistent with the supposition, that their powers were to be continued to their successors. St. Paul has warned us, that even the gifts of the Holy Spirit might *be quenched*, and that it was sometimes necessary * *to rekindle their energy*. How much more then is the caution necessary now, when the *miraculous* testimonies of the Holy Spirit are no longer granted, to beware of whatsoever is not either expressly taught in Scripture, or inconsistent with what it teaches?

On points of doctrine, or of form, the traditions of the Fathers of the church are certainly deserving of high respect: but it is always to be remembered, that *inspired knowledge ceased with the apostles*. No Father of the church has claimed it after the apostolic age; and even of that age, † Hermes Pastor is the

* *Ἀναζωπυρεῖν*.—2 Tim. i. 6.

† As the church of Rome lays so much stress upon tradition, the sentiments of this venerable Father, as to fasts, might be

only writer, besides the apostles, of any authority that did. The opinions of the Fathers and Councils, therefore, since that age, are *merely human opinions*, of *no further* authority than as they *agree with the written word of God*; and this agreement must be the more strict in proportion to the importance of the subject, and especially where there is danger of great impiety in an assumption.

The power of admitting or rejecting, as to her communion, the church certainly has; and the judgment of a truly pious and conscientious minister of God's word on the state of the penitent, and the assurance which, upon that authority, he may be enabled to give, will seldom be very erroneous; and thus far his authority will justify him. He is authorized, *as far as a human judgment extends*, to pronounce that God will forgive the penitent, and, *with the reservation to the future judgment of God*, to pronounce whether he be in a state of salvation or not.

Accordingly it is, that, in the most strong form of absolution in the liturgy of the church of England,

worthy of her attention. They were, at least, those of the Christian church in the writer's time.

Sicut solebam, sic inquam, jejuno. Nescitis inquit (Pastor) Deo jejunare, neque est jejunium hoc quod vos jejunatis, Deo nihil proficientes.—Jejuna enim verum jejunium tale. Nihil in vitâ tuâ nequiter facias, sed menti purâ servi Deo custodiens mandata ejus.—*Pastor, lib. 3. cap. 5.*

“ I fast, said I, as usual. Ye know not, answered he (the shepherd) how to fast to God, nor is yours a fast of avail towards God.—Fast thou a true fast. Do nothing evil in thy life, but serve God with a pure mind, and keep his commandments.”

the words *I absolve* are preceded by a prayer that God will forgive the penitent, and so ratify the judgment of the minister. The absolution, thus made conditional, and thus understood, is well founded, and does not convey the absurd and impious idea (that the minister himself pardons sins) which has been of such mischievous effect in the Romish church. The power, thus understood, is confirmed by the whole tenour of Scripture upon the subject, and not merely on the single expression *of remitting of sins*, because that there may be some doubt whether this expression was not used by our Saviour, *as he had before used it*, to signify the power of *healing the infirm*, in which case *retaining sins* would signify *the not healing those, whose faith was not such as was required*. Admitting the words in the usual acceptation, still it remains to be observed (as above mentioned), that when a law is promulgated, and the cases which admit of pardon are specified by it; if the lawgiver, after such promulgation, should say to any of his judges, *whomsoever ye pardon I will pardon*, it is evident that, though he did not repeat the limitation, it must be understood, and that the power would be intrusted in the confidence that the limitation was so understood. It is also evident, that though the judge, as the more immediate object, were said to pardon, that the pardon ought to be attributed in propriety to the Sovereign; and that, if granted improperly, it would be revoked both as to the judge and the offender.

Again, should the Sovereign have declared in his law, that he would, at a future time, revise every case personally, and, after such a declaration, without re-

voking it, express himself in a similar manner to a judge, the hope entertained from the pardon pronounced by the judge would go no further than the dependence upon his integrity ; and there would appear something not very reconcilable to real wisdom, thus to appoint a *double trial*, and to confer a power of pardoning by words to the judge, which seemed to convey that real power of pardon which they did not, because that, if they did, *there would be no future trial*. If, however, the Sovereign's instructions were not to one properly a judge, but to one well informed in his law, to prepare offenders for the day of trial, to instruct them how to repair and atone for injuries ; how, by a timely reformation, to regain his favour ; and, where he thought them worthy, to assure their hopes of pardon and favour ; the nature of the office would be perfectly intelligible, and consistent with the highest wisdom and benevolence.

Thus also as to the Christian law ; it proclaims pardon to the repentant sinner ; but, in this life, he is not *upon his trial*, but *preparing for it*. The judgment of the divine is not, therefore, *the sentence* of acquittal or condemnation ; but a *legal opinion upon the case*, the advantage whereof is great, to direct, to fortify, and tranquillise the mind. In this there is nothing that transfers the sceptre of Omnipotence to humanity, or suggests that its sway is determined by the will of one, who, as a mortal, must be frail ; and, as the creature, must be dependent on the pleasure of his Creator.

The error of the church of Rome has arisen from asserting that to be a *judicial* act, which cannot,

without an impeachment of the divine justice, be other than *declaratory of the judgment of the man*; that is, a declaration of pardon, if the terms be fulfilled truly. For whether *they are* so, however man may *presume*, nothing but actual and immediate inspiration can enable him to determine truly in many, if not most cases. Accordingly, the very learned and pious Bishop Taylor, speaking of absolution, says, * "Let him" (that is, one whose conscience is troubled) "declare his estate to his spiritual guide, and if he thinks fit to absolve him, that is, to *declare* him to be in the state of grace and pardon, it is *all the warrant* which, with the testimony of God's Spirit, bearing witness to our spirit, *we can expect in this world.*" *The testimony of God's Spirit is his word*; and it is only as this good Bishop (than whom none was a more able judge of the doctrines of the church of England) understood the doctrine of absolution, that its most decisive form (that in the office for the sick) ought to be understood. When it announces its authority, it cannot, rationally, be understood to exceed that authority. And, undoubtedly, the judgment of an upright and conscientious clergyman ought to be of great weight with every one, who is anxious as to the state of his soul.

In the church of Rome, the absolution, being declared to be a *judicial* act, is held consequently to be an act completely within the power of the priest. And thus it is accordingly acknowledged in the Petition.

* Worthy Communicant, p. 300. ed. Lond. 1686.

It states, that the petitioners "do not believe, that any sin whatsoever committed by them can be forgiven at the mere will of any Pope, or of any priest, or of any person or persons whatever ; but that any person who receives absolution for the same, without a sincere sorrow for them, and a firm and sincere resolution to avoid future guilt, and to atone to God, so far from obtaining thereby any remission of his sins, incurs the additional guilt of violating a sacrament."

This, if I understand it rightly, does not in the least alter the case, or obviate the objection of Protestants. It admits the *judicial* power of absolution ; and it must be one very ignorant of the doctrines of the church of Rome, who does not know, that the terms of granting absolution here specified, are those which, by her canons, are required. The complaint of the Protestants is, that by attributing a judicial power to the person who gives the absolution, the Romish church not only goes further than she is authorized by Scripture to do, but has, by this means, opened the door to the * most excessive abuses in the application ; that, having prevented the Scriptures from being read, the opinion of the priest became the measure of right and wrong, of sin and piety, and has been so, sometimes independent of, and often contrary to, Scripture ; and that the people,

* This principle of absolving from oaths of compact has, like others already mentioned, a very high Roman authority. It was established in breaking the league with the Samnites, and confirmed on the ruins of Numantia. So thoroughly have the principles of Pagan Rome pervaded its Christianity.

not knowing the true Christian principles of conduct from the Scriptures themselves, conceive the opinion of the priest as always right, and a power of absolution as one vested fully in him, so as certain to be ratified by the supreme Being ; and thus, thinking themselves secure, have been frequently led astray into errors the most dangerous, and conduct the most disastrous, when sanctioned by priests of an ambitious, turbulent, or otherwise unprincipled character ; or such as, being well-intentioned, were in error themselves, or deceived by others.

This is a danger which must ever remain whilst the doctrine of absolution being a *judicial* act of the person remains unmodified ; the abuses of the power claimed have increased the danger ; and the power itself, unlimited as it is claimed, and immorally as it has been applied, is a grievous and impious perversion of Scripture and religion.

There is an unhappy promptitude in man to deceive himself, where the object is of importance to his happiness, and to extend his confidence beyond the limit which reason and truth must necessarily determine. But the final issue will, notwithstanding, prove that this limit will not vary with the fluctuations of the human will ; and it is rather too much to require, that man should be content to risk the fatal danger of exceeding it, for want of its being clearly ascertained. It is too much, that man should be suffered to endanger his salvation, by presuming on the force of an ambiguous term. The judicial absolution by the priest either is subject to a final ratification or reversal by the Deity, in the day of judgment, or it

is NOT. If it is, then it is, though judicial, *conditionally* judicial; and if so allowed and understood, the danger of the doctrine will, I conceive, be obviated, and the doctrine be admissible, though the term "judicial" is objectionable. If it is not, then I have no hesitation in saying, that the doctrine is contrary both to reason and Scripture, and dangerous to the salvation of every individual, and the safety of every state. It is in the power of the Romish church to satisfy the public in which of these two senses they understand the term *judicial*; it owes the explanation as much to its own adherents as to others; and with a sincere wish that it may do it satisfactorily, to the consideration of the members of that church I now leave it.

The application of this doctrine to oaths has, above all others, been of the greatest prejudice to civil society; and it is much to be lamented, that the mode of reasoning on the obligation of oaths seems, of late, to have taken a turn no less dangerous, especially as to oaths of compact. It is true, that compact may be conditional; but it is not true, that compact, simply expressed, is to be understood as conditional. The latter would expose society to all the evils of mental reservation, and be even more injurious than the Romish doctrine of absolution; and a casuistry would arise which would destroy all confidence.

In arguments of this kind, it seems, unhappily, to be forgotten, that there is a witness to compacts *who cannot be deceived*, and who will not let the deceiver go unpunished—even *the God that is invoked*.

As to expediency, the matter is clear. To break

an oath for a probable good, is to sacrifice a positive duty upon a double presumption ; first, that the particular good may arise ; and, secondly, that God will pardon it. Is then the hand of God shortened so, that he cannot make the probable good itself the punishment, or turn the probable evil into a blessing ? He is little of a Christian who thinks so, and can have had little experience, who has not, some time or other, found, or known it to be so ; or who will, on presumption of its being pardoned, be guilty of the infraction of an engagement of so high a nature.

It may also, with reason perhaps, be absolutely denied, that it is ever truly expedient to * break a serious engagement, even by words only, without so solemn a sanction as that of an oath ; and much less so with it, inasmuch as it breaks down the strong barrier of principle upon which all reliance of man upon man depends. One instance is readily presumed to infer a succession, and, in proportion to its magnitude, entails (and frequently beyond that proportion) diffidence, distrust, and a plea of justification to those, who may also find it expedient to retaliate in kind. Thus, by natural means, the divine displeasure makes the effects of the error its own punishment ; and whosoever has once set an example of it, has seldom failed to find, that it has been sedulously followed, and improved against himself.

If, therefore, motives are offered in favour of infraction of oaths, they may justly be liable to heavy sus-

* On this subject the Reader will find a curious document in the Antijacobin Magazine, Appendix to vol. xxxi. p. 499.

picion, that interest outweighs principle in the suggestion, which example will neither encourage nor justify; which confidence in society cannot consist with; and which the law of God forbids. To every honest mind the inquiry will be, not what sense or construction *may be* plausibly, or even possibly, brought within the comprehension of the terms, but what they *were* directly and plainly *intended* to mark and signify.

On a subject of such high import as the coronation oath, it is a circumstance which, though it has already been treated of with as little reserve as delicacy, is not, therefore, in itself the less difficult or delicate. When a Roman Catholic treats of it, his object is to find means to prove, if he can, that the terms of it *may be* so understood, as to allow of an admission of the Catholics to a share of political power, and of an encouragement of their religion. On the other hand, when a Protestant treats of it, he does so under the knowledge, that the intent of it was wholly to exclude both, and to secure the object of the Revolution. What that object was, cannot be more pointedly, or more comprehensively expressed, than in the words which, I humbly hope, I may be permitted to extract from the report of an animated and eloquent speech of his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland, which reflects honour on the illustrious House of Brunswick, in the person of the Noble Speaker; and for which his Royal Highness deserves, and, I believe, has, the thanks of every sincere Protestant:—“The great object,” said his Grace, “was to secure the religion and liberties of these realms. These

objects were confirmed by the act of settlement, by the declaration of rights, by the oath of supremacy and abjuration, and by the succession to the Crown in the Protestant line. To maintain and uphold all these, our family was called to the throne. And whatever can militate with these principles, in the remotest degree, it is my bounden duty, as a member of that family, and as a member of your Lordships' House, to resist."

For an assurance of the maintenance of these principles, so clearly and energetically expressed, the Protestant considers the coronation oath as his security; and, in its intent, as extending effectually to it. His construction of it, from the fact of the original and received intent, must, therefore, necessarily be directly the reverse of that which the Roman Catholic will, as necessarily, wish to give to it; and neither will consider the comment of the other as an eligible one, on what regards his opposed interest. If then fears have been liberally put in one scale, may it not be permitted to consider, whether there might not some fears be put in the other, should the whole body of the Protestants conceive, that from such concessions to the Catholics, as those so eagerly sought, the security of the Protestant was given up, or, what is still more to be feared, might act as if it was. There is no danger in the warning; the danger would be only when it was done; and it is not the flimsy veil of a casuistical subtlety that can blind common sense, or overturn well-founded and generally acknowledged principles. We have, blessed be God! a Sovereign, who is too

firm to yield where conscience opposes it ; and who has the penetration and wisdom to see, that the most dangerous argument which his enemies could wish to have against him would be, that his faith had been violated. And it may be much questioned whether even ignorance could palliate a wish, that he should act in any degree so, as to afford the real grounds for the presumption of it.

In a case of conscience, example is neither a safe argument, nor a justification at any time. The true question is, not *who* did so ? but, *was it right* to do so ? If it was not, the name is, if not immaterial, only the more dangerous as an authority, because of its pre-eminence.

The example of Henry VIII. has very little alluring in it. How, unless for a purpose of aspersion, this monarch could be any way considered as a founder of the Reformation, is very strange. Every obnoxious doctrine of the church of Rome, except that of Papal supremacy, he retained to his death. It is true that he took, and wisely took, the Government of the clergy out of the Pope's hands, and assumed all the temporal power of the Pope to himself, and perhaps (though unjustifiably) some of the spiritual. To serve this end he allowed the Scriptures to be read, but he was perfectly innocent, as to any intention of his, that a Reformation should follow, as it necessarily did. Trajan might just as well be said to have founded Christianity in the Government of Pliny, when he forbid him to persecute, as Henry to have founded the Reformation. But his allowing the

Scriptures to be read produced the Reformation? I most cheerfully grant it. It proves that Popery could not stand if all read the Scriptures.

Having assumed the power of the Pope, he was taught, as to that power, that it extended to the suppression of religious houses by the Pope, Clement VII. and Cardinal Wolsey, who suppressed as many as forty for the maintenance of the College of Christ Church; and if Henry exercised the sacrilegious power with a rugged and unsparing hand, he did no more than what the authority of the Pope had taught him to believe might be done, without any impeachment of his protection of the church, though both did wrong in this respect.

As to Elizabeth, whether there was any clause in her oath, which prevented her from the *reforming* of the church by setting aside errors, which had crept into it, not having the form within my reach, I cannot say. But I presume not, as she was particularly careful to assert, that she was *not introducing a new religion*, but *reforming the errors of the old one*. And this was true. If blame attaches to her for this, so does it to the council of Trent; for ten, out of the twenty-five sessions, were considerably engaged in *reformations*; and if the *forbidding* the Scriptures to be read in the original, or the vulgar tongues, or indeed at all, but by special permission, was a reformation held to be justifiable, perhaps it may as rationally and as conscientiously be held, that the *permitting* them to be read was at least equally so. If that council, concealing the Scriptures, established doctrines unsupported by them, surely she was not

more to blame in assenting to the laying aside of all such. Her conscience might stand easier by far than the consciences of those reverend Fathers. When these objections are made against Elizabeth, it seems to be forgotten that, so far was she from injuring the spiritual rights of her subjects, she did in fact but assert them, and vindicate them from the tyranny of the Popes. How her sister Mary's conscience stood, when she brought them back to a slavish submission to it, would be much more difficult to answer.

The case of the church of Scotland, in the reigns of King William and Queen Anne, was one very different from that of the Catholics. That church is subject to no foreign supremacy; and though, as to matter of form, it differs *so far* essentially from the church of England; in matter of doctrine, where it does not regard matter of form, I believe the moderate men of both churches consider them as * agreeing in essentials, and in what is of great consequence, their rejection of the errors of the Romish church. They were and are both true Protestant churches; and that of the Scotch church was, though not in the eye of the law, in fact the established one in Scotland. The act of the Legislature has since made it so, which was before a reformed church, and of the Protestant

* It is well known that several attempts have been made by some of the most moderate and best men of the churches of England and Scotland to unite them by a comprehension. Some account of the last may be seen in Doddridge's Letters. Much, very much, is it to be lamented, that it did not succeed. But, be it remembered to their honour, the failure is not to be attributed to them. I am unwilling to say more, without entering more fully into the subject than the present occasion will admit of.

religion, though not conformable in some things to the church of England.

When the Author of *The Considerations*, therefore, represents it as “a hard obligation upon the King, of swearing to maintain two religious establishments in their tenets extremely opposite,” (p. 94,) by omitting wherein the opposition consists, he has himself made the difficulty. For there is nothing of those tenets, in which they are opposite, that trenches upon the fundamental truths and principles of Christianity, as to *the faith itself*; and therefore the church, that holds them, may be maintained without a dereliction of principle, though he who does so differs from it in other respects.

In what way King William considered the question, and whether he was justifiable or not, is now in the determination of that Judge before whom no subterfuge will avail. And though it may be presumed that both he and Queen Anne thought they were securing the reformed religion against Popery, in the most effectual manner then apparent, it does not follow that, though they did it rightly, it was right because *they* did it. The examples therefore are not to be drawn into precedent.

Here it is impossible to avoid observing, that though these high names are quoted, as it should seem, to authorize a departure from the intent of the coronation oath, there is no scruple in representing them as *perjured*. That neither Elizabeth, William, nor Anne, did think themselves so, may be inferred from the strong minds and principles of the three; but it is rather evident, that, if their examples were followed,

as desired, upon the contrary supposition, the charge of perjury would with no less readiness be attached in the latter case than in the others, should it be convenient as to further concessions to do so.

As to the cases of Canada and Corsica, so often referred to, they stand upon grounds perfectly distinct. They have no such connexion with the Legislature of Britain as to affect the constitution. Did they send Members to the British Parliament, and had, as they would have thereby, an influence on the British constitution itself; or had they formed a constituent and effective portion of the British dominions, in which the church of England was established, when the terms of the oath were settled; or had the church of England been the established one in either country, at the time of their becoming united to England, they would certainly have come within the oath. But none of these was the case. Neither the church, nor the constitution of England, lost of their privileges, extent, or force; nor were they exposed to any hazard of so doing, by that which was done. They might be benefited, but they could not be injured. Nor was any thing more upon either occasion possible. Whereas, with respect to Ireland, the case is otherwise in every one of the respects above mentioned; and therefore neither of these cases can properly be drawn into precedent as to it.

The Author of *The Vindication* observes, (p. 118,) that "the Petitioners have abjured any intention to subvert the present church establishment." It is true they have so, and also "any privilege to which they are, or may become, entitled to *disturb, or weaken the*

Protestant religion, or Protestant Government, in Ireland."

It also follows in the Petition, "The sole object of your Petitioners being an equal participation, upon equal terms with their fellow-citizens, of *the full* benefits of the British laws and constitution."

Perhaps in the former of the clauses here quoted may be found the true reason why none of the Roman-Catholic clergy signed the Petition; and if so, I think it a just one. Nor do I think a clergyman of the church of England could, with a safe conscience, sign such a clause, which would bind him not *to weaken a religion* he thought erroneous; the single case of a temporary refuge from immediate distress, upon a condition not to do so, excepted.

How the participation here sought for can be *a full one*, except the Romish clergy be put on the same footing with the Protestant, unless the Petition regard the laity only, cannot well be conceived. If it be this, it is naturally to be expected, that, if the laity succeed, the clergy will then take the advantage-ground, and this Petition, from which they are so far excluded, will be followed up by one from them to a similar purpose. There is nothing extraordinary in the supposition, and it will appear extremely probable, when it is observed, that though the Petition, already presented, does not point towards any thing of the kind, the Hon. Author of *The Considerations*, and other advocates of the same question, do explicitly extend their views to an established provision for the Romish clergy, and that out of the revenues of the established church. To such a provision the teachers of every Protestant sect have a claim prior by far;

and to grant it would be one effectual mode of injuring, if not of gradually subverting, the establishment of the church of England, It may not become a generous person to be suspicious: but the generosity which does not suspect, where it ought, is better entitled to the name of folly.

But these views do not stop merely at the provision. The Hon. Author expresses them with the fullest distinctness as follows. "I shall expect, seriously I shall expect, when the subject has been more matured, to hear that the Irish Bishops of the establishment, having first *generously made over a portion of their revenues* for the decent maintenance of their Catholic brethren, are ready to make *further proposals* to an alternate enjoyment, subject always to his Majesty's choice, of episcopal dignities and emoluments." The climax here is surely yet deficient! should it not follow, *and finally that they should resign to them their dignities and emoluments altogether?* for then it would be complete. It is not in the nature of ambition to stop whilst there is a somewhat beyond, that is not *impossible* to be attained. The portion of the vineyard granted will but make the whole the more desirable. The old landmarks once removed, the new ones will be soon thrust forward, till at length they are thrown aside altogether, and the last poor remnant completes the surrender. The warning to an alarming degree is amply given; God grant it may be taken as such, whilst the evil may be prevented in the outset; if it be not, the error may be repented of, when it will not be possible to retrieve it.

The idea of an union between the two churches of

England and of Rome, which the Hon. Author of *The Considerations* has brought forward, is, from the manner in which this is done, entitled to a respectful attention. Such an union, if with a safe conscience it could be effected, would be a blessing to mankind; and I am free to acknowledge, that prejudices may have had some share in preventing it, and political interests still more. From what has been said already on the subject, I hope it will appear, that the Roman primacy is not only unscriptural, but that to aim at an universal primacy is contrary to Scripture, and in reality a Heathen claim. There is also a point, in which it materially affects the liberties of every national church even in a political light, that is, the reducing the clergy to the state of dependants on Rome, and tributaries to it; and all national primates of that church to subalterns generally too obedient to its discretion, who, by their station, and the usage of the primitive church, and as far as can be collected from Scripture, should be *his equals* of right. It also affects them, as the views of Rome must take place often of the national and personal ones, which in every other respect might demand a preference. A primacy in every state may be necessary for the regulation of the church; but it must be ever injurious to any state to allow the primate, resident in another, to have any weighty influence, and much more so to exercise power, or authority of any kind, in it. So far as it is so done, it unking the Sovereign, and deprives his subjects of their rights by nature, and by the law of God. It exposes their religion to be perverted, and their interests to be sacrificed to the will of one, who may

have no regard to either. For these reasons, any exercise of power by the primacy of Rome ought by no means to be admitted, and the less as the Archbishops and Bishops, or either, of any nation, are fully competent, on the authority of Scripture, and by the usage of the primitive church, to consecrate their own primatè. When Christianity had begun to spread among the Saxons, and that with difficulty, and England afforded little hope of emolument to Rome, the application to Rome for consecration, it appeared, could be dispensed with ; for Pope Honorius, having sent a Pall to Honorius the Archbishop of Canterbury, says, in his letter on the occasion, as to the succession to Canterbury or York, * “ When one of yowe is departed this mortall life, the other which is lefte a lyve shall assigne an other Bishop in the departed Archbishop’s rome, and dignite.” The same might therefore still be done.

The doctrine of transubstantiation is still more objectionable. It is founded only on a most violent wresting and misinterpretation of Scripture from the plain and evident meaning of the original words in the language in which they were spoken. That the Saviour of man, in his divine character, is so present in the sacrament, as beholding all things, and every where present, is admitted ; and that his blessing attends the proper and devout reception in an especial manner. Thus far he may therefore be said to be consubstantiated with the holy elements ; though the expression is liable to objection, by going too far, cer-

* Bede, Eccl. Hist. book 2. chap. 18. Stapleton’s translation.

tainly, if it exceeds the limits here assigned. The doctrine of transubstantiation is perfectly distinct from, and inconsistent with this. It is true that we differ about the mode, in which our Saviour is present; and this very subject of difference is of such magnitude, as to distinguish between a rational or irrational faith, between a pure and an idolatrous worship; and between a true and false interpretation of that revelation, on which our salvation depends.

There is nothing in Scripture to justify an invocation of saints; and the very words, that "there is *one* Mediator between God and man," do, by a necessary implication, *forbid* it.

If purgatory were a harmless opinion, still there being no authority for it in the New Testament is a very cogent reason for rejecting it. But is that an harmless opinion, when, unauthorized as it is, it has been in a great part, if not wholly, the foundation of the doctrine of indulgences? Surely not. It may certainly be gratifying; and, if it be so to many laudable feelings of the heart, it is so to many of a different description. But, on a subject of such consequence, the feelings are out of the question. Our concern is, to be assured *whether it be true*; for otherwise it may be as dangerous as it is gratifying. Till it is proved to be true, it ought to be rejected.

Between the opinions then of the church of England and those of the church of Rome peculiar to it, there does not appear any thing of that approximation, which the Hon. Author of *The Considerations* assumes in his argument; nor yet in the rapid sketch of points of concurrence, which is quoted from a report of the

speech of * one whose eloquence must be admired, though his positions be controverted. "We acknowledge the same God, the same Redeemer, the same consequences, the same Bible, and † the same Testament. Agreeing in this"—Do we really agree in all this? It were to be wished we did. The object would be more likely to be attained. When our Saviour objected to the Pharisees, that, by their doctrine of the Corban, they had subverted the fifth commandment, did he and they agree in their acknowledgment of the law of Moses? Both indeed acknowledged it as coming from God; though the Pharisee by his exposition destroyed the force and intent of the original. It is to little purpose that both churches acknowledge the Bible to be the revealed word of God, as to agreement, if the doctrines they maintain, respecting some of the most essential points of belief and practice, are totally irreconcilable. Still less is it so, as the church of Rome has established an ‡ im-

* Mr. Grattan.

† I believe I may safely say, that the words, *the same Testament*, were added merely through inadvertency.

‡ The doctrines of penance and reverencing of images, and of marriage being a sacrament, have been founded on this translation: the former on the words *agite pœnitentiam*, Matt. iii. 2. which may be translated *do penance*, though the original says, *Μετανοείτε, repent*; and the latter on a decided error in the translation of Heb. xi. 21. where it says, *Jacob ADORÉD the head of his staff*, where the original says, *he bowed on the head of his staff*.

The council of Trent quotes Ephes. v. in *fine*, as an authority that marriage is a sacrament; and it is true that the Vulgate translation does in this passage (ver. 32) translate the words *Τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ μυστα ἑστίν*, *this is a great MYSTERY*, thus, SACRAMENTUM hoc

perfect translation as authentic, thereby preventing appeals to the original. Be the differences then matter of opinion; still it recurs, what influence have they as such upon society? Do they create no difference of interests? So indeed it was said; and it is to be believed that, when it was so, the idea was that of full persuasion. But where, in the experience of past ages, or our own, shall we find it so? Or is that of the present so different from all other experience, as to be an encouragement to look to it. Where religion is considered and held as detached from political interests; where it does not assume a power of controlling the opinions of those who dissent; or where it hangs so loosely as to leave the mind indifferent to the spiritual welfare of others; or if it should come to pass among Christians, as among the Hindus, and the Indians of America, that each, satisfied with his own opinion, should conclude that other religious opinions were the best for those who adopted them; then it might be granted that these differences of opinions would not cause a division of interests. Or had the Romish religion that spirit of peceableness, which is the true spirit of Christianity; and had those who profess it here, and in Ireland, no connexion with a foreign authority, the differences of interests would be greatly lessened. How far this may be hoped for,

magnum est, using the word *Sacramentum* as synonymous, not to the usual acceptation of the word *sacrament*, but to *mystery*, which is the true signification of the original word. Thus has the doctrine been founded on a wrong conception of the meaning of the passage referred to, which, through ignorance of the original, they were perhaps unable to correct.

time alone can show. The errors of the church of Rome are surely too gross to be held much longer.

As to all the peculiar doctrines above enumerated, it is evident that the church of England must expect concessions from the church of Rome; and yet it is not improbable that the church of Rome would be most decisive, not only in refusing any, but in requiring many; and, under the specious term of *conciliation*, demand every thing, and yield nothing. If, however, there be a real wish in that church for conciliation, let her show it by allowing all of her community, who can read, a free use of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue. Without this preliminary it would be idle to expect any good result. The church of England would only commit herself by listening to the proposal, and would too late find herself the dupe of her own benevolence and sincerity *.

It is not long, since, under the idea of an ill-considered generosity and patriotic liberality, the nobility and clergy of France were throwing away their privileges, their honours, and their property, at the foot-

* At a late meeting of the Roman Catholic Bishops in Dublin, it was determined—

“That it is the decided opinion of the Roman-Catholic Prelates of Ireland, here assembled, that it is inexpedient to introduce any alterations in the Canonical mode hitherto observed in the nomination of Irish Roman Catholic Bishops, which mode experience has proved to be unexceptionable, wise, and salutary.”

This determination shews nothing of a spirit of conciliation, or even of that idle concession, so much spoken of as such by the friends of the Question, of *permitting* the King to act the part of deference to the Pope's authority. The proposal was a deep one.

stool of popularity, in the delirium of the day, which was excited by an infatuated system, called philosophy, and terminated by an accumulation of ruin and horror. They broke down their own fences, and devastation ensued. A mistaken and fatal spirit of supposed philanthropy, that would look on man only through the medium of a theoretic representation, and not as he practically is, tore down all distinctions, and by so doing let loose all the evil passions on both sides against each other.

Before it is too late, may the consequences in a neighbouring kingdom be a salutary warning to Britain. This country owes much to the Saxon laws enacted independently of Popery; she owes much to Magna Charta, which the Papal authority annulled as far as it could; but she owes most to the Reformation. With it came the liberty to inquire into, and the knowledge to ascertain, what was true in religion, and truly beneficial to man in legislation. Be it permitted here to repeat, that it is to the general knowledge of the sacred writings only, that the liberal, the mild, the just, and equal temper, that distinguishes the laws of Britain, can truly be attributed. It is by this knowledge that the benevolent character, and the love of justice in the nation, were perfected to that pre-eminence which it holds in Europe. To know the Scriptures, was to know justice, and mercy, and benevolence, as duties; not on the variable and partial authority or representation of man; but on the clear and incontrovertible authority of a divine revelation open to all. This authority to those who teach, and those who are taught, is the same; and it was the

searching into, and investigating, the grand truths it displays, that gave birth and safety to that spirit of investigation, that has explored and irradiated the powers of the human mind, investigated the properties of elementary matter, and discovered the magnificent harmony of those laws of the Creator, which rule over the motions of the lights of Heaven in their courses; and, what is yet of interest incomparably greater, given to the practice an unerring rule, to faith rational motives, and to rectitude the sure hope of eternal felicity.

The most dangerous introduction to error is an indifference to what is right. Thus far, it is to be feared, error has obtained a wide influence already. When the Roman Catholic religion is held up as Christianity, and its errors glided over, or palliated, by Protestants, what will be the natural effect upon those who are but ill-informed; and especially when, on the other side, they will be told there is no salvation out of the pale of the Romish church? Will not this facilitate the seduction to that church? most assuredly it will. But how far is the Romish religion Christianity? Transubstantiation is not Christianity, purgatory is not Christianity, Papal supremacy is not Christianity; indulgences, invocation of saints, image worship or reverence, prayers in an unknown language, keeping back the use of the Scriptures from the people, and authenticating an imperfect translation of them. None of these are Christianity; they have nothing to do with it. Can the teaching of these be called teaching Christianity, which in great part are the very reverse of it? If then some other doctrines of Christianity

are taught with these, yet these are such as so pervert Christianity itself, as scarcely to leave what deserves the name.

When, therefore, such errors are encouraged, what Protestant is there who will not justly feel an alarm for those, who are exposed to its contagion? for the young, for the ignorant, who by their situation may be forced to an association with those who are indefatigable in their endeavours to lead them astray?

How, it may be asked, comes it to pass, that we now look for assistance by the encouragement of error? Are we retracing backwards the steps of the Revolution and the Reformation, and not unwilling to see the cloud of ignorance, that is now rising *like a hand*, overspread our horizon? Can the assistance sought by such means be expected to relieve? If the blessing of God has been conspicuous on this nation, it has been so because it has served him truly, and not turned aside; and as to the strength, which is acquired by a sacrifice of religious principle, it will come impaired in itself.

There was a time when preserving religion safe was considered as essential; when there was a reliance upon God sufficiently firm to believe, that he would not suffer the nation to fall that was steadfast to his truth. Whether that time is completely past or not, the voice of the public at large must give a better evidence than it has hitherto done, before it can be determined. Whether it be ready to undermine and subvert its constitution, religious and civil, I now leave to it, with the admonition of the Prophet upon a

similar occasion : * " The Lord is with you while ye be with him—but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you."

* 2 Chron. xv. 2.

APPENDIX.

OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

AS this doctrinal point is one of the principal causes of difference between Protestants and the church of Rome, it may be permitted to add a few more words, more particularly in answer to what has been said by Bossuet on the subject. He says—

* “As for us, who find nothing in the words, which Jesus Christ makes use of for the institution, obliging us to take them in a figurative sense, we think that a sufficient reason to determine us to the literal.”

If it were not that eloquence and sound reason are not necessarily concomitant, one must be astonished that Bossuet could argue thus. What! is it not sufficient that the literal sense would convey not only an impossibility; but an absurdity, to which all those of Polytheism were as nothing, to oblige us to interpret them figuratively? The Heathens could believe, and, with their obscure notions of a Deity, not very irrationally, that there was a multiplicity of gods; but even they never went so far as to imagine, that one deity could be in ten thousand places wholly and

* See Exposition of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church, ed. Lond. 1688, p. 109. or Exposition de la Foi, p. 116. ed. Paris, 12mo. A. D. 1730, for the same purport.

distinctly at *one* and at *the same* time. Why would Bossuet, or any of the church of Rome, attempt to *reason* on the subject, which, according to their idea of it, *defies all reasoning*? They would perhaps say that it is part of a revelation. To this it may be most decisively answered, it is so impossible it could be such, as to compel human reason, *if reduced to the alternative*, to deny that to be a revelation from the Deity, which insists upon it. For the reception of any laws or doctrines, as revealed, depends upon *the evidence*, internal and external, that they are revelations, as these evidences convince the understanding and the senses. These, then, being the only means with which the Deity has endowed man to distinguish between truth and falsehood, it follows necessarily, that man is bound to use them to avoid falling into error; and also that the Deity, when he proposes any thing to man as an article of belief, does not propose *what is inconsistent in itself*, because this would be to *subvert the understanding itself*. To propose to man to believe that one person, corporeal or spiritual, may be wholly and distinctly at two different places, at one and the same time, is only an amplification of the proposition, that *two* and *one* are, or may be, *the same*, in *the same sense*. Now, we are either *certain* that *this cannot be*, or we are *certain of nothing*. If the latter, we cannot be convinced of the truth of any thing. If the former, then the doctrine of transubstantiation cannot be true. This simple mode of stating the subject is chosen, because absurdities, like the fabled giants of antiquity, increase their influence with their growth; and that they who would readily

agree that *two and one are not the same, in the same sense*, lose, in the amplification, all sight of the *same impossibility* attending the proposition, that one and one million are the same, in the same sense. These considerations, to a rational being, would be amply sufficient to compel him to look for a figurative sense in the words of our Saviour, if there were no other reason; to pass over the minor absurdities of our Saviour's being supposed *to take himself in his own hand*, to sit before his disciples and break *himself* to pieces with *his own hands*, to distribute *twelve himself* to his disciples besides, *all which thirteen real himself* were but *one himself, in the same sense, and at the same time*. What (might a Heathen justly say) is there so absurd or incredible as this in all our mythology? Certainly, nothing.

As to the arguments from Omnipotence, it is time enough to consider them when it is first proved that the words must not, and *cannot*, be understood in a figurative sense; though, reverentially be it said, Omnipotence itself does not extend to *the identification of one and more in the same sense*. But, says Bossuet, * “ In establishing a sign, which has no relation to the thing, as, for example, a morsel of bread to signify the body of a man, the name of the thing signified should be given to it without any explication, and before any agreement, as Jesus Christ has done in his last supper, is a thing unheard-of, and of which we find no example in holy writ, not to say in any

* Exposition de la Foi, p. 129; or the Translation, p. 114.

language." The original says, "dans toute la langue humaine"—*in the whole of the language of mankind*. Suppose it were unheard-of before, or that human language did not afford another instance, the expression might still be as singular as the occasion, and be *an exception* to common language; as common sense would conclude it necessarily to be, from the very fact of our Saviour's personal delivery of the bread and wine.

Here also it so happens, that the argument of Bossuet proves directly the reverse of that which it was intended to prove. For, where there is no specific agreement or explanation of the use of a particular important expression, either given or required, the reason must be, that in the previous habitual use of the language, the sense of the expression was *too evident to be liable to misconception*, in the language in which it was spoken. This was precisely the case with the expression in question. Exclusive of the idiom of the Hebrew language, which is constantly elliptical, and highly figurative, as all its dialects also are, the *habitual* language of our Saviour was *symbolical*. If, therefore, he spoke the words, *This is my body*, in his *habitual* mode of expression, as when he said, *I am the door*, &c. the words needed neither previous special agreement nor explanation; whereas, had he intended them in their literal acceptance, then the shock it would give to their reason and *their* senses would necessarily have required it, and *then only*.

Even thus far might be a sufficient answer. But as an instance of a similar mode of expression, on a

similar occasion, is said to be *unheard-of*; what are we to think of Bossuet's authority, if more than one can be produced from the Bible itself? The giving a sign of so high a nature is a circumstance, that had not, in the divine dispensations, the occasions of frequent recurrence. The rainbow, circumcision, and the passover, are the principal signs that had been previously given. The rainbow is said explicitly to be a sign, as otherwise it *could not* be so understood. In the history, however, of the appointment of circumcision, an expression is used, and afterwards explained, so that a Jew could never afterwards be at a loss how to understand a symbolical expression. In * Genesis xvii. ver. 10. it is said, "*This † is (or shall be) my covenant*—every man-child among you shall be circumcised;" and in ver. 11. "Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be **A TOKEN** *of the covenant* betwixt you and me."

Here the words, *This shall be my covenant*, and *this shall be the token of my covenant*, are equivalent. In this case the explanation of such a mode of expression is given, and therefore no further explanation was necessary, as to future cases of the kind.

Accordingly, when the Israelites were directed to kill and eat the paschal lamb, he tells them, ‡ *It is*

* The Vulgate has it thus:—*Hoc est pactum meum—Circumcidetur ex vobis omne masculinum. Et circumcidetis carnem præputii vestri, ut sit in signum fæderis inter me et vos.*—N. B. The same word *berith*, of the original, is here translated, first, by *pactum*, and then by *fædus*.

† The verb substantive is omitted in the original, as usual.

‡ Exodus, chap. xii.

the Lord's passover. He adds, that the blood of the lamb upon the door-posts of the house would be a *sign* to the Lord to pass over that house: but the blood afterwards made no part of the *passover*; it was not to be eaten, but thrown away. How the *eating of the lamb* could be *the action of passing over*, or *the sign* of it, there had been no previous agreement; and Moses explains this no further than our Saviour did, as to the bread and wine. They were to be *memorials*; and the frequent use of symbolical memorials, among the Jews, and all other nations, made it unnecessary to do so.

What then becomes of Bossuet's rhetorical assertion, that such a mode of expression is *unheard-of in the whole of the languages of mankind*? One would be tempted to smile at the pomposity of the appeal from one, who could not have known a fiftieth, perhaps a hundredth, part of the *whole of the languages of mankind*, were not the smile repressed by regret, that he was not better acquainted with *the Scripture*, even through the imperfect medium of that portion of human language which *he did know*.

OF THE INVOCATION OF SAINTS.

On this subject a very natural difficulty occurs, and it was felt as such by Bossuet, viz. How can we know that any of the saints (whom we may believe to be such) can have any cognizance of prayers offered to them? For it would seem rather necessary to be assured of this, if we should pray to them. As Scrip-

ture gives *no information* on the subject, the Bishop thus endeavours to prove it:—* “The church contents herself to teach with *all antiquity*” (a good round assertion) “these prayers to be very profitable to such who make them, whether it be the saints, by the ministry and communication of angels, who, according to the testimony of Scripture, know what passes amongst us, being established by God’s order as administering spirits, to co-operate with us in the work of our salvation; or whether it be, that God himself makes known to them our desires by a particular *revelation*; or lastly, whether it be, that he discovers the secret to them in his *divine essence*, in which all truth is comprised.” That is, in a few words, *he knows nothing at all of the manner how they know it*. He therefore endeavours to guess, and that not very happily for his subject; since he is obliged to suppose, that they have no direct and immediate knowledge of what passes on earth. The latter part of the supposition is too monstrous, even to be allowed to the imagination of Bossuet himself, viz. that the supreme Being should communicate our prayers to the saints, in order that they may pray to *himself*. It is beneath further notice. When he asserts, that prayer to the saints has been the practice of *all antiquity*; admitting that he means only the antiquity of the Christian church, for his credit it were to be wished he knew no better. However, though this can scarcely be, it is in direct contradiction to the fact. Daille had charged the

* Translation, p. 76.

Fathers of the fourth century with having admitted new doctrines, (as to saints and reliques,) into the church ; and how does Bossuet attempt to answer him ? Is it by producing proofs to the contrary ? This he was aware was impossible ; and therefore endeavours to enforce the principle out of respect to the Fathers that maintained it, and by begging the question as follows :

* “ But it will not appear very likely that Mr. Daille should understand the sentiments of the Fathers of the first three ages better than those who gathered, as I may say, as it were, the succession of their doctrine after their deaths ; and this will be so much the less credible, because the Fathers of the fourth age were so far from perceiving that they introduced any novelty in that worship, that this minister, on the contrary, has quoted several express passages, by which he shews clearly where they pretended, in praying to saints, to follow the examples of their predecessors. But, *without any further examination what might be the sentiments of the Fathers of the three first ages*, I will content myself with what Mr. Daille himself is pleased to grant, allowing us so many great men, who taught the church in the fourth age. I hope those of his communion will have more respect for these great men.”

To be so very easily contented would be much more in character to a determined partizan, than to a defender of what he believed to be true. How much more eligible would the proper mode of reply have

been, if it had been practicable? We have writings of several of the Fathers of the three first centuries; and, if they taught any thing of the kind, could they have omitted, on some occasion or other, to notice what the church of Rome now holds to be so pious a part of devotion? Why then rest on the Fathers of the fourth, and make *them* tantamount to all antiquity? Simply because their predecessors *say nothing of it*. Even Lactantius, who wrote a whole book on the subject of *True Worship*, in the beginning of the fourth century, does not give the most distant intimation of respect for reliques, or prayer to saints. As to the Fathers, we respect them as far as *they respect and adhere to the Scriptures*, and *no further* can we do so. Error is a weed, that strikes its roots, and gathers strength, in obscurity. It is seldom noticed till it has taken root, and becomes conspicuous by its growth. This error seems to have begun to shew itself earlier than Bossuet was aware that he might date it; that is, in the time of the apostles themselves; and where alone it could be supposed to do so, that is, among the Gentile converts. In the Epistle to the Colossians, chap. ii. v. 18. St. Paul says to them, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind," that is, *by merely human imaginations of what is not revealed*; "and not holding" (*i. e. adhering to*) "the Head."

The Gentiles, with Plato at their head, thought the Deity too great to be directly addressed, and therefore, by a voluntary humiliation, wished to address him

through the intermediate intercessions of inferior celestial beings ; and it was natural, therefore, for the Gentile converts to apply the same mode of reasoning to Christianity. The Jews, on the contrary, *knew*, that their religious reverence was to be addressed to God alone, and that even Daniel was not permitted to give it to an angel. And the objection, which St. Paul opposes to any worshipping of angels, concludes against the paying any religious reverence to any other than God himself, viz. that it is *not holding the Head*, that is, not adhering to the supreme Being, as the only original source of all, and the only Giver of good, the common Father and Protector of his creatures, who wills that they should consider themselves as all equally under the superintending eye of the same omniscient Being, and as brethren in the vast earthly dwelling of the human race.

This grand and sublime idea of the Omnipresent, and impartially just and beneficent common Father of all created beings, it was one of the great purposes of revelation to teach and maintain ; and to rescue the human mind from the misguiding effects of imaginations enfeebled by ignorance, and bewildered by hopes and terrors. The savage's idea of a God is as limited nearly as his horizon. He feels there exists a superior Being, and wishes his favour towards himself, and his enmity towards his enemy. The idea of local and personal partialities in angels, or sainted spirits, is merely an improvement of the first idea of the savage, applied to Christianity ; and, to suppose their intercessions to avail, we must suppose passions and partialities, similar to those which man feels, to

prevail in the pure mind of Omnipotence, and thus degrade him to the rank almost of imperfect humanity.

Nor is this all. The supposed intercessor, also, will intercept *a portion*, and perhaps the *greater* portion of the gratitude due for favour, supposed to be obtained through his intercession ; and instead of the sense of an impartial and omnipresent God, we have partial and local dispensations of his favour taught in direct opposition to it.

Of the state of departed spirits we *know* nothing ; of that of angels very little. To worship either is then an intrusion into those things which are not revealed, and therefore forbidden by the apostle.

To reverence images is still worse. However a representation may work upon the senses, it degrades the conception of a God, perverts the imagination with the ideas of local or personal partialities, and a debased idea of him, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. Such also is the effect of believing the Host to be the transubstantiated body of our Saviour. It is to all human perception but an image to those, who believe it to be himself under that form ; for it is not himself *in his own proper character*.

Images of saints have similar effects. By a little familiarity with such objects the ignorant will always ascribe virtues (that is, beneficent effects) to the image, or something connected with it. A veil is thus interposed between them and the Deity, false ideas of him generated, and the saint, and finally the image, have that homage which the word of God declares he will not permit to be given to another.

The council of Trent has, it is true, forbid the attributing any virtue or excellence to the image; it was then aware of the danger, and the more culpable in not abolishing the use of them, the evil consequences of which had been sufficiently apparent, even in the high estimation of that at Loretto.

OF TRADITION.

This and the following part of the Bishop of Meaux's subject, which might with more propriety, though with less convenience, and perhaps some danger to the rest of his Exposition of the Doctrines of the Romish Church, have opened the subject, he has skilfully for his purpose reserved to close it. The elucidation, which it affords, of the meaning of the authority, which he quotes under the magnificent terms *all antiquity*, might have abated much of the deference of readers, who would reflect upon the subject; and he has therefore placed that, which would not bear scrutiny, where it would be least attended to. Having read his assertions, that his positions were supported by *all antiquity*, the most part of his readers were not likely to trouble themselves much with looking further than an obvious meaning.

It is admitted that * "when Jesus Christ had founded his church by his preaching, the unwritten word was the first rule of Christianity." But the Bishop adds,

* Translation, p. 157.

"And when the writings of the New Testament were added, this unwritten word did not upon that account lose its authority; which makes us receive, with equal veneration, all that was ever taught by the Apostles, whether by writing, or by word of mouth, as St. Paul himself has expressly declared." The reference in the margin in my French copy (which is that of Paris; in 12mo. A. D. 1730) is to 2 Thess. ii. 24. I presume by an error of the press for 2 Thess. ii. 15. which runs thus; "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."

To this every sincere Christian will answer, that he is willing and desirous to adhere to all *that was really, and in fact, taught* by our Saviour or the Apostles, by preaching or writing. The writings of the Apostles and Evangelists, as collected in the New Testament, being allowed by Protestants and Roman Catholics in general to be genuine, the question between them is only as to other tradition. The difficulty is, how to be assured that any tradition, *said* to be that of our Saviour, or his Apostles, is genuine. This difficulty the Bishop endeavours to obviate by the following criterion. * "It is," says he, "a most certain sign a doctrine comes from the Apostles, when it is universally embraced by all Christian churches, without any possibility of shewing its beginning. We cannot choose but receive all that is established

* Translation, p. 158.

after this manner, with the submission due to divine authority."

This sign, however, which is denominated *certain*, is so far from being certain, that it includes a supposition, which even daily experience, public and private, proves to be fallacious, viz. that the rise, or first commencement, of error, is not only perceived, but noticed and recorded as such. Now there are many circumstances which may prevent this: ignorance; a coincidence of the error with popular prejudices, or with party views; carelessness, &c. But it happens unfortunately for the church of Rome, that the commencement of her errors may be marked with tolerable precision, at least so far as to determine periods of the primitive church in which they did not exist, or could not co-exist with its doctrines. This has already been shown in the contrast stated between the modern and primitive church of Rome, as to transubstantiation and the use of images. It may also be presumed, that when Origen had recourse to the doctrine of the metempsychosis, in order to reconcile the ideas of the justice and mercy of God, he had no idea of purgatory, which would have been a doctrine not ill adapted to his purpose.

But to proceed with the Bishop's argument, he adds, * "We are persuaded that those" (the Protestants) "who are not obstinate, are in the bottom of their hearts of the same opinion, it being impossible to believe a doctrine received from the beginning of

* Translation, p. 158.

the church can flow from any other source than that of the apostles." Here the Bishop takes for granted the very thing which was to be proved, and which we deny, viz. that the doctrines we object to *were* those of the Apostles. Either the Apostles taught one set of doctrines by their writings, and a different set of doctrines orally; or they taught the same both ways. If the former, neither deserves any credit. If the latter, then those they taught orally must be consistent with those they taught by their writings correctly understood; and if the Romish church were able to prove her's to be so, there would be, comparatively, little room for dissension.

There is a plain and simple rule as to tradition. If it can be traced, on good authority, up to the age *immediately succeeding* that of the Apostles, and is *not inconsistent* with their writings, it may then be assumed as probably genuine; though this is the utmost; for, even *in their times*, we find that an oral tradition was a mistaken one. "Then went this saying forth among the brethren, that that disciple should not die. Yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die, &c." John xxi. 23. If such was the case in the very time of the Apostles, as to an oral tradition, what might it not be afterwards?

OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH.

The arguments on which the church of Rome rests the strength of its cause are, the authority of the church, and tradition. And, it is to be observed, that by using the word *church* simply, the church of

Rome is especially intended, though the term is properly general.

The authority of the church is thus maintained by Bossuet :

* "The church," says he, "being established by God to be the guardian of Scripture and tradition, we receive the canonical Scriptures from her;" (*i. e.* its authority;) "and, let our adversaries say what they will, we doubt not but it is her authority which principally determines them to reverence, as divine books, *the Canticle of Canticles*, which has so few visible marks of a prophetic inspiration; the Epistle of St. James, which Luther rejected; and that of St. Jude, which might appear suspected, because of some apocryphal books cited in it. In fine, *it can only be from this authority* they receive the whole body of Scripture, which all Christians accept as divine, even *before their reading of it has made them sensible of the Spirit of God in it.*"

-- Is the last sentence a mere statement of a supposed fact; or, is it a satire on the blind credulity of his church? Be it which it may, a violent adversary could scarcely allege what is a more severe satire upon it. The Koran is from God, our church tells us so, says the Mahomedan; the Vedas are from God, our church tells us so, say the Hindoos; the Scriptures are from God, our church tells us so, say the Roman Catholics; and therefore may each of these sects say, we obey them before we perceive the Spirit of God in these writings. So far, then, neither can justly reproach

* Translation, p. 159.

the other; and before a preference can be assigned to any one of them over the other, something more must be done. It must be proved *which of them tells the truth.*

Previous to the further discussion of the argument, it is to be observed, that, had Bossuet ever read the Targum on the Song of Solomon, he would have found, that the Jews considered the whole of it as an allegorical prophecy of future events to the Jews; and if all the canonical books of the Jews have been received as such by Christians, it is because *they were written before the spirit of prophecy had ceased amongst the Jews, and that they are considered as having been mostly written, and all, most probably, carefully selected, arranged, and freed from error, by prophets.*

Of the five catholic Epistles, two only, viz. the First of St. Peter, and the First of St. John, were *universally* acknowledged by the primitive church, and Luther was *so far* justifiable in rejecting that of St. James. As to St. Jude's quoting an apocryphal book, it is so far from being the case, that he quotes *no book at all.* He quotes words attributed to Enoch, but he refers to no authority, and, for aught he says, it may be supposed he knew it by revelation. An apocryphal book of Enoch is said to have existed, and the Apostle has been *supposed* to quote it, but this is mere supposition.

~~It is now full time to return to the main argument.~~
The argument has already been stated, that "The church being established by God to be the guardian of the Scriptures, and of tradition, we receive the

canonical Scripture on its authority :” the Bishop thus continues the argument :

* “ Being then inseparably bound, as we are, to the holy authority of the church, by means of the Scriptures, which we receive from her hand, we learn the tradition also from her ; and, by means of the tradition, we learn the true sense of Scripture.”

From what is here said, one would imagine that the Scriptures were written in hieroglyphics, of which the priests of the church of Christ, like the priests of the Egyptians, (from whom the idea seems to have been borrowed,) had the key, instead of their being written in characters and language accessible to mankind. But as they are written in the latter, it may, without rashness, be presumed, that they are intelligible by the common means—accuracy of judgment, and a competent knowledge of the languages in which they were originally written. One of these languages, the Hebrew, is certainly better understood now than it was in the third century, by † some of the Fathers ; and the other, the Greek, as well perhaps as by most of the Greeks themselves.

Again, “ the church,” according to the above-quoted passage, is established “ by God”—“ and we are bound to it by means of the Scriptures”—and “ the church learns the true sense of Scripture by means of the tradition,” which this same church hands down.

* Translation, p. 159.

† Irenæus, and, after him, Lactantius, derive the word Pascha from the Greek word *πάσχειν*, *paschein*, (to suffer,) instead of from the Hebrew word *פסח*, *pasach*, (to pass over,) so little did they know of Hebrew.

The Christian church in general (though it does not follow exclusively, that any particular church adheres to its original establishment) is admitted, not upon assertion, but upon rational proof, to have been, and to be, established by God. It is also admitted, that we are bound to that, which is truly his church, by means of the Scriptures; because they constitute the proof. But the church of Rome, the church here meant, first asserts, that its votaries are bound to it by the Scriptures, and then assumes the sole power of interpreting the sense of those Scriptures, by the most suspicious of all possible authorities, its own traditions, which it would be hard to distinguish from its own will and pleasure. Thus the church of Rome founds its doctrines on the Scriptures, and the Scriptures may be interpreted as it pleases the church of Rome, which, if not the best, is the *most commodious* system of interpretation ever adopted.

If the truth only were the object, the rational rule would assert, that if any church, upon the pretext of tradition, forces the sense of Scripture, from what sound criticism, aided by a knowledge of the original language, proves it to be, that church is no longer a true Christian church, if the error affects any fundamental doctrine of Christianity preached by Christ, or his Apostles. Or whether, by this means, or any other, it introduces a doctrine absolutely inconsistent with those which the Apostles have given in their writings, the bond of Christian attachment, or obedience, is from that time broken; and, to use Bossuet's own words nearly, a church ceases to be so, when it ceases to teach the truth, *as it is revealed* by God.

Of the assumption, that the Holy Spirit has presided continually over the councils of the church, enough, it may be hoped, has been said in the preceding tract. To this it is unnecessary to add more, than that *a belief in the holy Catholic church is very distinct from a belief in a church which calls itself Catholic*. That only can be the holy Catholic church, which teaches no other doctrines than those which Christ commanded to be taught. This is the point in debate. Bossuet asserts that, * “To the end that she might for ever banish all arbitrary interpretations, which make men’s imaginations pass for Scripture,” his church “has bound herself to interpret them, in what relates to faith and morals, according to the sense of the holy Fathers; and that she does not receive any doctrine which is not conformable to the tradition of all preceding ages.”

It has already been proved, as to the doctrine of transubstantiation, that it is not conformable to the tradition of all preceding ages; and though, in such a sweeping assertion, one exception proved is sufficient, it may not be improper to ask, whence did it happen, that none of the Apostles, or early Fathers, have left any trace of *having preserved a relique of St. STEPHEN*, (who died before the conversion of St. Paul,) or of *his canonization*, or *a prayer to him*, or *the Virgin*? Simply because it was *no doctrine of THEIRS*.

But let it be understood, that though we oppose

* Translation, p. 162.

the *errors*, or *abuses*, of the authority in any particular church, we do not, therefore, by any means deny, that, according to the command of Christ, and the institutions of the Apostles, a succession of teachers was appointed in the Christian church; and that authority was given to them to teach the doctrines of Christ. But authority goes no further than the terms of its grant. If perverted, or abused, it is *so far* null and void; and this we contend is the case of the church of Rome.

The Bishop observes, and truly, that the reformed churches of France, in order to uniformity of doctrine, felt the necessity of having recourse to a synod. In the government of the church in general, as in that of a state, if the individual churches intend unity, there must be somewhere a superintendence, whether under the name of convocation, synod, or council; and in concerns, or points, of importance, those who are the most capable must be selected to canvass them, and form the best opinion they can. It is also true, that, in most assemblies of the kind, there will be individuals, who, whether possessed of more knowledge and probity than the rest, or through ignorant error, ambition, pride, or selfish motives, will dissent from the general opinion.

But there will always be this difference in the very mode of dissension. The man of knowledge and probity will not dissent on light grounds, or dubious positions; and will lessen the obstacles to agreement, as far as may be possible, without giving up essentials; whereas the other will magnify his particular view of a dubious position into an essential, and seldom think

any ground to be avoided upon which he can raise a difficulty. The object of the former is the truth only; that of the latter, self-importance. And whilst human nature is what it is, there will always be such. The common sense, and rational opinion, of mankind, will, however, notwithstanding this, hold its course; and the necessity of union, as well as the real advantage of argument, finally prevail.

In the beginning of the Reformation, the eagerness to escape from the errors of the church of Rome led the Protestants of France to reject, we think, more than was necessary; in England it was conducted with a moderation and discrimination that do it honour. It was satisfied with laying aside what was decisively erroneous.

It is a common objection to the general reading of the Scriptures, that dissensions arise in consequence of it. It might as well be objected to the use of daily food, that some will be gluttons and others drunkards. Is it any reason that mankind should be deprived of food spiritual, or corporeal, because that some will turn the blessing of God to their own destruction? Or, are the teachers to monopolize the power of leading men astray by keeping them hoodwinked? If there were not a very powerful apprehension that the perusal of the Scriptures would overturn their doctrines, there would be no need of preventing it. Other Christian sects differ chiefly upon abstruse points, either not determined by Scripture, (and such therefore as may be argued upon while the world lasts,) or on forms, as to which the argument rests more upon *inference* than *direct expression*, and

these also allow a very convenient latitude for argument. But the appeal of both sides is to the Scriptures to determine whether the inference, or position, is right or wrong. This is fair and candid as to the authority, whereas the church of Rome suppresses them, and prevents inquiry.

But it is argued that she does it to prevent misinterpretation. If this argument were well founded, it would seem that the Scriptures were writings of so dubious a kind, that they might admit of a variety of different interpretations as to the rules of conduct, and the essential principles of the faith, which they are not ; and if they were, then the faith itself would be in danger. That there are some passages hard to be understood, is mentioned even by an apostle, with the warning to the ignorant and unlearned to take care that they do not wrest them to their own destruction ; but this is no reason that they should not read and profit by what they can understand, and inquire of the learned as to the rest. If the church of Rome ever ventures to permit this generally, then, and then only, we may begin to look forward towards an approximation, of which, at present, the prospect does not appear to open.

FINIS.

